







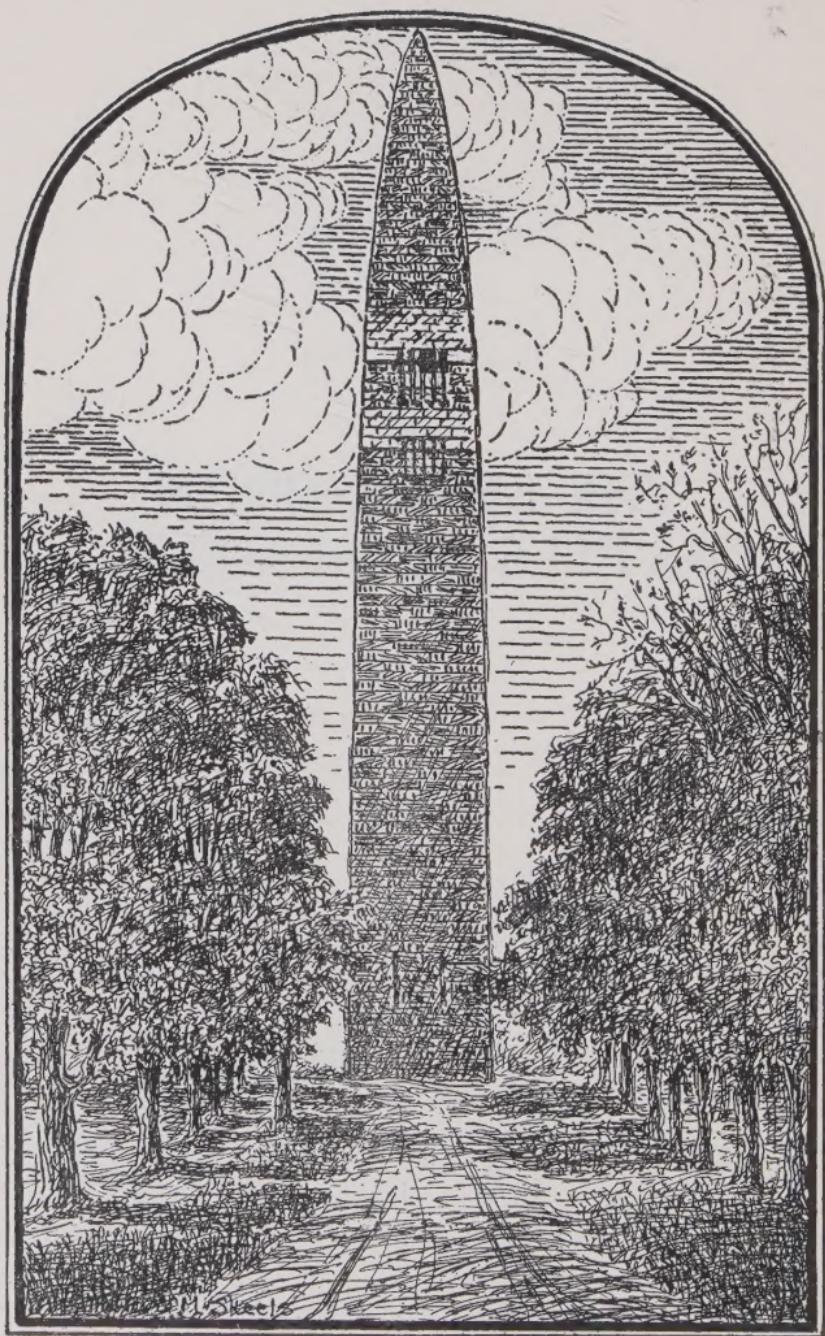


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THE BENNINGTON  
BATTLE MONUMENT



THE MONUMENT TODAY

# THE BENNINGTON BATTLE MONUMENT

ITS STORY AND  
ITS MEANING



*By JOHN SPARGO*

President of the Bennington Battle Monument  
and Historical Association

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TO  
EDWARD L. BATES

Secretary of the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical  
Association, in cordial appreciation of his faithful  
service in preserving the records of  
Bennington's splendid history



## CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I Introduction	9
II The History of the Name	18
III Causes of the Battle	27
IV The Battle and Its Results	46
V The Opposing Forces	63
VI Bennington Cares for the Victims	77
VII How the Monument Was Built	88
VIII Monument Facts and Figures	120

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The Monument Today	Frontispiece
A Proposed Battle Monument. The Rinn-Bartlett Design of 1877	14
Hartley-Willard Design	28
Weir Design	42
Rinn's Big Tower	56
Various Profiles of Rinn's Big Tower	70
Rinn's Obelisk and Circular Museum	84
The Monument Under Construction, Raising the Cap Stone	104



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of people visit the Bennington Battle Monument in the course of each year. They come from all the States in the Union, and, not infrequently, from other lands. In the summer of 1924 more than 23,000 persons paid the modest fee charged for permission to climb to the upper landing and lookout. It is probably an under-estimate of the facts to suggest that for every visitor who takes the trouble to make that climb there are ten who do not. These are content to look at the monument from outside, to enjoy the view from the ground, or to step just inside the door. It is a common occurrence for large parties to arrive, one or two individuals only making the ascent, the others remaining below. It is quite evident from the foregoing that the monument is an object of great interest to a large number of people.

It is not at all unusual for visitors to make known that they have made long journeys to see the monument. It is even said that one man made the journey from Spain just to see the monument, and returned to Spain on the next boat completely satisfied. But he was an enthusiastic Vermonter—and we may be pardoned for suspecting that a sight of the green hills of Vermont was as alluring as the monument. Sometimes people make long journeys

to see the monument simply because they have read or heard about it and thus had their curiosity aroused. Occasionally it is because of some ancestral association, either with the place or with the stirring chapter in our history in honor of which the monument was erected. One day last summer a lady visitor went to a local hotel for lunch and confided to her host that she had motored all the way from Ohio to see the monument, simply because she had read so much about it in the newspapers at the time of its dedication, in 1891. Ever since that time she had cherished the ambition of seeing the monument.

Some four or five years ago one of our summer residents was accosted on the monument grounds by an old gentleman who told a story full of delightful romance. He had come more than a thousand miles, he said, that before he died he might see the battle monument and the place where a brave young soldier of long ago, in whose story he took great interest and no little pride, gave his life to the cause of American independence. He had thought that the memorable battle was fought at Bennington, where the monument is. He had imagined the ground around the monument to have been made sacred by the life blood of brave men on both sides, and to have received the mortal remains of the heroic dead. He was keenly disappointed when he learned that the battle was fought some six miles away, in New York State. He was determined that he would see the battlefield before he slept that night, and hired a motor car to take him there.

Impressed by his earnestness, the evident bitterness of his disappointment, and the peculiar poignancy of his

whole demeanor, the resident sought the visitor's story. It was as follows: When the visitor was a small boy, living in Kansas, his grandmother used to talk a great deal of the past, and especially of her grandfather, a New Hampshire man who fought under Stark at Bennington and was killed at sunset, just as the battle was ending in victory. She used to talk, too, of the patriot's wife, her grandmother, who was young and beautiful when she was widowed. When the period of her mourning had passed she had many suitors, but she listened to none and declared that her heart was buried at Bennington. Almost sixty years of widowhood she endured, dying at eighty-five, and the last words upon her lips were, "Take me to Bennington, to Joe."

When her only daughter, who was born some time after the Battle of Bennington, and to whom the word "father" had never represented any reality, undertook to set her mother's affairs in order she found among the few effects a lot of old letters, which she seems never to have read. She tied a string around them and wrote on the package that it was her belief that no good could come from reading the letters of dead folks. But she kept the package in an old chest until her death. Thus they came to the old gentleman's grandmother, still unopened and unread by anybody since the original recipient of them, and in that condition he had inherited them along with the old chest. He had kept them for many years, not daring to cut the string with which the package was tied, but at last had done so and read the letters. There was a boy's love letter to a girl sweetheart, from the boy

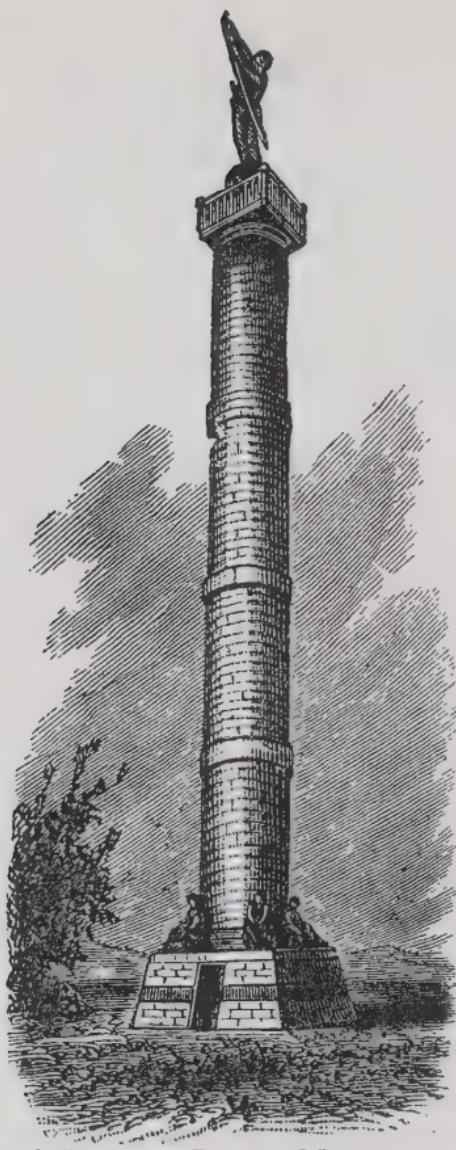
who was destined to die in battle to the girl destined to so long a widowhood with her heart buried at Bennington. There was a tender letter from Colonel Nichols, of New Hampshire, telling the young wife that her husband would not return to her from Bennington, a letter written, it is likely enough, from Landlord Fay's tavern, where the strong hearted proprietor was mourning the death of his son in the battle. There were dozens of other letters from men, letters offering love and proposing marriage, to which she could make no favorable and welcome answer because her heart was buried at Bennington.

It is to be supposed that most of those who visit the monument have no motive other than curiosity. They are people from neighboring towns and villages out for a ride, and the monument is a convenient objective point and resting place; or they are tourists motoring through the neighborhood and must not pass through Bennington without visiting its most famous attraction, the battle monument. Those who climb to the top landing and lookout are mainly inspired, we may suppose, by the wonderful and far-famed panoramic view, but there are some who seem to have no other purpose than to demonstrate how shrill, raucous and unlovely the voices of some human beings are. It was a Bennington man who said in a public speech, "When the big voice and the full-sized brain are united God is glorified and man is edified, but when the big voice goes with the little brain, as usually happens, God is mocked and man is tortured." That aphorism doubtless reflected much

injury unwittingly inflicted by leather-lunged visitors to the monument. Old Deacon Samuel Robinson—a lineal descendant of Captain Samuel Robinson, the pioneer settler of Bennington, and a typical Vermonter—used to declare that he had often heard the shouting of people up in the monument above the singing of the congregation in the church accompanied by the organ.

The questions asked about the monument and the battle it commémorates are as numerous and as varied as the visitors themselves. It is to be feared that the answers given by volunteers are not always as accurate as answers ought to be. "Why, old Ethan Allen commanded the Bennington men in the battle," one such volunteer informant assured an inquiring visitor, "and in church the following Sunday he got up and told the minister that he ought to have mentioned that fact in his prayer." That was simply a case of mixing up the Battle of Bennington with the capture of Ticonderoga. There was some such incident in the Meeting House after the latter event. Another visitor who asked about the battle was told that "more than a hundred men" from Bennington village were killed that August afternoon. That was an exaggeration, to say the least.

The questions most commonly asked about the monument are these:— Who built it? Why was it built here? Why was it not built where the fight took place? How high is it? How many steps are there in the stair-case? How big is the star on top? Where did the stone come from? Who designed it? How much did it cost? Who provided the money? How long did it take to build it?



A PROPOSED BATTLE MONUMENT

RINN-BARTLETT DESIGN

*See Page 97*

Who owns it? What is done with the money received in fees? Is it the highest monument in the country? All these questions are asked by visitors, and sometimes all of them by a single visitor!

Not less numerous and varied are the questions that are asked concerning the famous battle. One is sometimes impelled to believe that the subject upon which the average American is least informed is the history of his own country. The ignorance upon the subject frequently displayed is almost abyssmal. But, on the other hand, many of those who come show by their comments and questions that they know a great deal more about the Battle of Bennington, the men who fought in it and its historical significance, than most of those who have lived in Bennington all their lives and whose ancestors participated in the battle. The present writer is often reminded of an interesting experience in Italy during the World War. He had occasion to present his papers to an Italian military officer for examination. Noting the address, "Bennington, Vermont, U. S. A." the officer at once launched into a vigorous exposition of the importance of the battle, of the reasons why it was so far-reaching in its consequences, the reasons why Baume lost his chance of success by his delay near Cambridge, of the importance of success at Bennington to Burgoyne's plans, and why his defeat and surrender followed inevitably upon Stark's defeat of Baume. It was an amazing experience to hear this from an Italian army officer, who had never been in America, but had learned it all from German text-books! But of course he was a pro-

fessional soldier, and his knowledge was that of a specialist and expert in his own chosen field.

The questions most frequently asked about the battle are these:— Why was the battle fought? Why is it called “the Battle of Bennington” if it was not fought at Bennington? How was the name given to it? What name did Stark give the battle? Is it true that it was not called the Battle of Bennington until long years after it was fought? Was the fighting on the American side done almost entirely by New Hampshire men? Why was the command given to Stark and not to a Vermont man? Where was Ethan Allen? Why was Warner not in the first engagement? How many Vermonters were there? How many Massachusetts men were there? How many men did New York furnish? How many men were there on each side? Where did the Tories who fought under Baume come from? What sort of uniforms did the Americans wear? Did the enemy soldiers all wear red coats? Were there two battles or only one? Did the fighting last two days or only one? Where were the prisoners kept? Is it true that the prisoners were starved and tortured? Were the Tory prisoners treated worse than the others? Did John Stark live here in Bennington? Did Stark really make the speech about Molly sleeping a widow if the battle should go against them? Is it true that Molly Stark was in Bennington at the time, having come over from Brattleboro and so giving the road over the mountain the name “Molly Stark Trail?”

These are not imaginary questions. Every one of them

has been asked in good faith; some of them are asked almost every day. The object of this little book is to furnish reliable and authoritative answers to all of them, in as brief a space and as simple a manner as possible. We shall cite the best authorities as necessary, especially in dealing with those matters concerning which there has been doubt or dispute, but at the same time we shall avoid the use of too numerous footnotes, which would be a useless parade of pedantry and of small service to the reader. In order to get the whole matter into our minds in orderly fashion, let us first of all deal with the reasons why a battle that admittedly was not fought in Bennington, or even in Vermont, is called "The Battle of Bennington."

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORY OF THE NAME

If one should try to explain the diverse thoughts, fancies and experiences which have governed parents in naming their offspring, and to express them in a single formula or rule, the impossibility of the task would soon appear. Such an undertaking would be no more difficult, however, than would an attempt to formulate any rule explaining or accounting for the naming of battles, great or small. It requires only a cursory and superficial examination of military history to demonstrate that there never has been anything in the nature of a rule which military commanders or historians have followed in this important matter. Accidental factors have frequently been decisive rather than deliberate design, and sometimes have overruled the latter despite the efforts of official reporters and recorders. Nicknames have in this manner become ennobled. The jest of army camps has in many cases prevailed against all suggestions of scholarship, the will of commanders and the studied precision of official records. A single dramatic incident has named many a battle.

It is well to emphasize this point at the outset. Many of our visitors who ask questions about the battle are obviously under the impression that by an almost invariable rule battles have been named after the places where they were fought, and that, therefore, to call the battle

that was admittedly fought at Walloomsac the "Battle of Bennington" is an extraordinary exception to an established rule which commends itself by its simplicity and intelligibility. It is quite easy to understand this attitude, but the fact is that no such rule has ever existed. Nothing that indicates a general practice of the sort, much less an inflexible rule, can be gathered from the history of the great wars and battles of either the old world or the new.

It is sufficient for our present purpose to point out that the famous Battle of Blenheim—a name familiar to every schoolboy—was not fought at Blenheim, but at Hochstadt, a neighboring village; the Battle of Poltova was not fought at Poltova where the monument is, but three miles out of that town; the Battle of Waterloo was not fought at Waterloo, but miles away; the Battle of Bunker's Hill was not fought on Bunker's Hill, but on Breed's Hill, Charlestown; the Battle of Monmouth was actually fought at Freehold. The late Henry D. Hall of this town, in a scholarly discussion of this entire subject, cited these illustrations as well as that famous battle of antiquity, the Battle of Arbela, between Alexander the Great and Darius, 301 B. C. That battle was actually fought between forty and fifty miles from Arbela.

Indeed in all ages and in all lands battles have been named for many reasons, good, bad and indifferent, and according to no defined rule. Often it would appear that names have simply appeared and gained the sanction of usage without any ascertainable reason. The objective sought has determined the name of the battle far oftener

than the location of it has done. Frequently the name of the nearest town or city of importance has furnished the name. Quite as frequently, the headquarters of the commanding officer of the victorious army has furnished the designation of the battle, though it may have been fought miles away. It is easy to understand why this should be; the dispatches and official reports of the commanding officer, especially those announcing victories, impress the mind more deeply and more readily than their details. Frequently the actual engagement has been at some place not marked upon any map, of more or less uncertain nomenclature, while as a general rule the dispatches have been dated from places that were identifiable by means of a map. There is no violation of any rule, no departure from established general custom, in the fact that the battle fought on Walloomsac Heights is invariably called the Battle of Bennington.

Quite the contrary is true, in point of fact. The name can be fully justified by each and every one of the foregoing considerations. To possess Bennington, subdue its rebellious population and capture its important stores were the instructions that Baume, the commander of the invading force, had received from his superior, General Burgoyne. To prevent this disaster the forces under Stark set forth to prevent the foe from reaching Bennington. The objective of the battle, therefore, was Bennington and by that fact alone, following a common usage, the battle might properly be called the Battle of Bennington. If we invoke the equally common practice of naming battles after the nearest important centers of popula-

tion, we shall find full justification for the name Battle of Bennington, for while Walloomsac was an insignificant hamlet of less than a dozen scattered houses, Bennington was a thriving town of some 1500 inhabitants, with a well developed civic life and possessing most of the facilities common to inland towns of the period—church, taverns, stores, physicians, and so forth. More important still, it was the center of important political influence and activity. Bennington, too, was the headquarters of the victorious General, for it was there that Stark had made his plans, there his counsellors were, there his supplies. It was his base of operations and from there he sent the dispatches announcing his triumph. Thus we see that the name Battle of Bennington has the sanctions of the most common usages. A clear appreciation of these facts does away with a great deal of prejudice and misunderstanding and makes the whole subject very simple.

Let us now proceed to the next stage of our discussion, to the fact that by no deliberate design on the part of anybody, but as if from a common impulse, the battle came, almost immediately, to be known as the Battle of Bennington, both in America and in England. There could not well be a completer misreading of history than that which led the *Troy Times* to suggest that the partiality of New England historians, biased against New York, accounts for the adoption of the name. What was the attitude of Stark, the victor, and of Burgoyne, the vanquished? What did they call the battle, and what did their contemporaries call it?

In his formal and official report of the engagement to the New Hampshire Council and House of Representatives, August 18, just two days after the battle, Stark gave no name to the battle itself or to the location of it. Neither did he in the report that he wrote on August 22 to General Gates, which was intended for Congress, and may therefore be considered official. But in the letter that he wrote to the New Hampshire Council and House of Representatives presenting certain trophies of the battle, August 18, he referred to it as "the memorable battle at Walloomscook." In a similar letter accompanying the gift of trophies to "the State of Massachusetts Bay" he referred to "the memorable battle fought at Walloomscook." There is no attempt to give a name to the battle in either letter. Stark simply sets down the fact that it occurred *at* Walloomsac. It is interesting to note in this connection that for many years the leading citizens of Bennington, many of whom had participated in the battle, though they invariably named it the Battle of Bennington habitually used language quite similar to Stark's in referring to it as the victory at Walloomsac. Thus, as late as 1810, we find the Bennington committee charged with arrangements for the annual celebration of the Battle of Bennington, composed of Jonathan Robinson, Eleazar Hawks and David Fay, survivors of the battle, writing to Stark and referring to the fact that he had "led our troops to victory on the memorable hill of Walloomsac." There was no incongruity in their minds in calling a battle fought at Walloomsac the Battle of Bennington.

But as early as January 8, 1778, in a communication to the Massachusetts Legislature, Stark referred to the battle as "the battle of Bennington." From that time onward he appears to have regularly used the name. For example, in 1778 he wrote two letters in behalf of two of his soldiers, and in each of them he calls the battle the "Battle of Bennington."\* It is quite clear, therefore, that at a very early date Stark had made up his mind as to the name of the battle. It is interesting to note that the British commander, General Burgoyne, in the spirited defense of his conduct of the expedition in America made during the investigation by the House of Commons, repeatedly referred to the battle in such terms as "The enterprise at Bennington," "The expedition to Bennington," "the affair of Bennington" and "the action at Bennington," clearly proving that in his mind there was no other name for the battle than that which had come into common use. The same may be said of the speech of Lord George Gérmaine on the same occasion and of the examination of the Earl of Harrington. The term "battle of Bennington," was used in the examination of the Earl. No other name for the battle occurred to those men who were so vitally concerned in it.

Within a week of the battle Washington, in a letter to Major-General Putnam, referred to "the great stroke struck by General Stark near Bennington." Governor Clinton wrote in the same week, "Since the affair at Bennington not an Indian has been heard of, the scalping

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\*N. H. State Papers, xvi. pp. 419, 424.

has ceased." Peter Kimball, a captain in Stark's New Hampshire forces, in a diary that he kept from July 24, to September 25, 1777, refers to the battle in which he was a participant as "ye actions at Bennington."\* Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, noted in his diary, October 16, 1777, that he "Visited the Place of Bennington Battle," and again, on January 28, 1778, that he had "breakfasted with General Stark (at Rev. Dr. Havens) who gave me an aco. of the Battle of Bennington." Dr. Gordon's *History of the American Revolution*, published in London in 1788, is generally regarded as an important contemporary authority. It has been severely criticised for its many plagiarisms, but its accuracy has been generally admitted. It is therefore important to note that he repeatedly refers to the battle in such terms as "the disaster at Bennington," "the affair at Bennington," and so on.

We must bring this survey of the contemporary attitude to a close. To quote, or even refer to, all the contemporary accounts of the battle in which it is regarded as being essentially a Bennington affair would take many pages. So far as the present writer is aware, the first use of the actual name "Battle of Bennington" was made by John Hancock, President of Congress. On October 4, 1777, Congress passed a vote of thanks to General Stark and the officers and troops under his command, "for their brave and successful attack upon, and signal victory over the enemy, in their lines at Benning-

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\*C. C. Coffin, History of Boscowen and Webster, pp. 261-4.

ton." On October 5, in a letter transmitting this vote to Stark, Hancock used the phrase "for the signal victory you obtained over the enemy in the late battle of Bennington." That would appear to have been the first formal designation of the historic battle. On December 4, 1777, the Legislature of Massachusetts formally voted to accept Stark's present of the trophies of the battle, calling these "the tokens of victory gained at the memorable battle of Bennington." It is quite evident, therefore, that within a short time after the battle the name by which it is now known had come into general use.

Locally there was never any question concerning the propriety of the name until many years after all the participants in the battle and their contemporaries had passed away. On the first anniversary of the event it was solemnly celebrated at Bennington, as the Battle of Bennington. The address by Noah Smith and the long poem by Stephen Jacobs were published by the Committee in charge of the event. Annually for many years thereafter the anniversary of the "Battle of Bennington" was celebrated, the survivors of the battle taking an active part. Sometimes the celebration was held on the battle-field itself, as it was in 1802, when a sham fight was carried out. In 1810 the celebration was held at "the former headquarters of General Stark, near the dwelling house of Mr. David Henry, in a field near the boundary line of Bennington and Hoosick." Residents of Hoosick and neighboring places were in attendance and it is notable that none made objection—so far as there is any record—to such toasts as "The surviving heroes of Bennington

Battle, though their locks are whitened with many winters, yet their hearts are still warm in their country's cause" and "The heroes of liberty who fell in Bennington Battle." Similar toasts to these were offered at the celebrations for many years afterward, none objecting, though there were residents of Hoosick, Walloomsac, and White Creek in attendance.

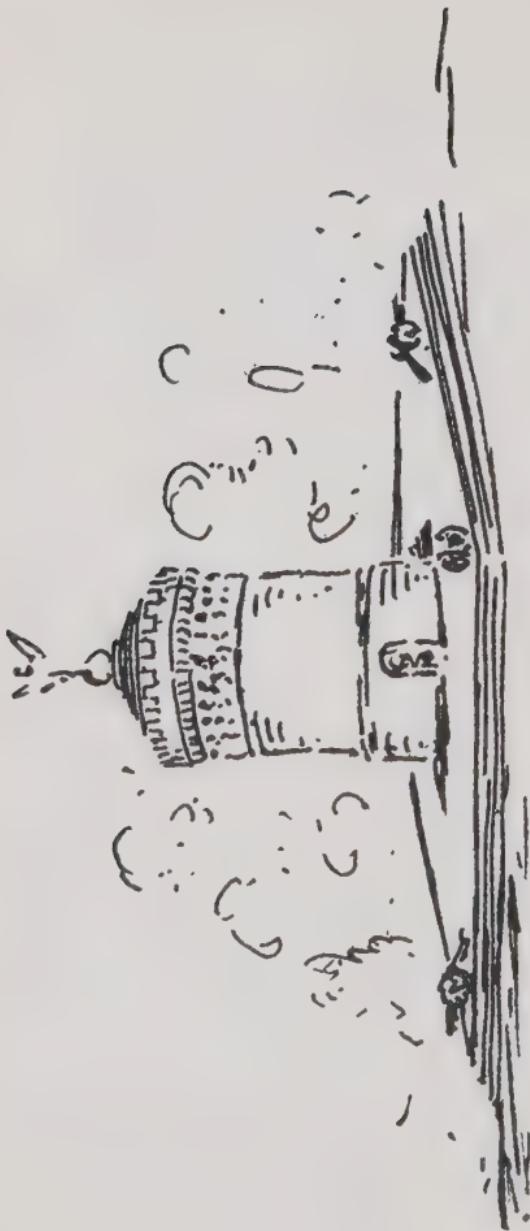
Surely, we may say that the name that the memorable battle bears came to it naturally and honorably and possesses every sanction of right, propriety and long usage.

## CHAPTER III

### CAUSES OF THE BATTLE

It is not altogether surprising that there should be a widespread opinion that the Battle of Bennington was in some way connected with the struggle of the people of Vermont against New York over the land grants. That, however, is not the case. It was a revolutionary battle pure and simple and the question of the validity of the land grants of New Hampshire had nothing to do with it, neither did the fiercely contested question of New York's jurisdiction. The people of Vermont had decided—at any rate their active leaders had—that they would throw in their lot with the patriots in the struggle to throw off the foreign yoke. The other struggle was in the meantime postponed, though not forgotten.

Early in the morning of July 6, 1777, the British forces marched, unopposed, into the fortress of Ticonderoga. The American commander, General St. Clair, had permitted himself to be outgeneralled in the most extraordinary manner. True, the forces of General Burgoyne opposed to him were twice as numerous as his own, but he had the advantage of position at the outset and of fortifications upon which much effort and money had been spent. He permitted himself to be invested without taking the most elementary precautions. He failed to call for reinforcements in time. He permitted Frazer's corps



HARTLEY-WILLARD DESIGN

*See Page 99*

to cut off his communications with Lake George without making an effort to prevent it, though he had at least 4,000 effective troops and upwards of a hundred cannon. He assumed that Mt. Defiance, which completely dominated the fort, was impregnable and made no effort to occupy it, though it might have been done under conditions far more favorable than Burgoyne had when he successfully undertook the task. Burgoyne saw the fatal omission and took advantage of it. A road was cut up the mountain side and by the exercise of rare determination and energy two twelve pounders were placed in position, being drawn up the precipitous heights by oxen and by man power. From that moment Burgoyne had the fort at his mercy.

During the night of July 5 St. Clair's forces silently evacuated, most of them going over the bridge to Mt. Independence and thence by way of Hubbardton. Some of the baggage and army supplies St. Clair managed to send to Skeneborough by water. In the morning the British took possession of the abandoned fortress with its hundred cannon. Without a blow the "American Gibraltar," as it was called, had fallen into the enemy's hands. It was a terrible disaster to the American cause, all the more serious because of the long chain of misfortunes which preceded it. Burgoyne was now free to use his large and well equipped army for offensive action in other directions.

St. Clair aimed at joining his superior officer, General Schuyler, who was at Fort Edward with some two thousand men. He pushed on with all possible speed, guarded

in the rear by a small detachment under Colonel Francis. On his way he met Colonel Seth Warner marching with his regiment to Ticonderoga, all unaware of the evacuation. St. Clair, who reached Hubbardton in the afternoon, waited there until the rear-guard under Colonel Francis came up. Then he strengthened the rear-guard so that it comprised three regiments, placed Warner in command of it, and hurried on to Castleton, six miles away.

Warner and Francis with the rear-guard remained at Hubbardton over night. Early next morning their pickets were surprised by Frazer's scouts while they were cooking breakfast preparatory to march. There ensued the engagement known as the Battle of Hubbardton. The opposing forces of Warner and Frazer were about equal, so far as numbers went, but the British were the picked men of their army. Frazer had 850 men and Warner 800. For three hours the forces battled, neither side gaining material advantage. Fifty men, or less, thrown into the scale of either side might have decided the issue. At length, as the British wavered and were about to give way, they heard the singing of their advancing German allies under General Reidesel. The Americans were defeated. On the American side the loss was three hundred men killed and wounded, and many prisoners taken; the British loss was two hundred killed and wounded, including seventeen officers. Warner managed to escape with a remnant of his force.

Almost at the same time Skenesborough was taken by the enemy, the American flotilla on Lake Champlain

blown up by the crews to keep it from falling into the hands of the enemy, and the precious stores abandoned. Thus was disaster piled upon disaster. Consternation spread through the country. In a week Burgoyne had taken Ticonderoga, with upwards of a hundred cannon; had scattered the army of General St. Clair; had captured or destroyed an enormous quantity of American stores, the loss of which was a serious matter; had swept the American naval force from the lake and had spread fear and alarm far and wide among the people.\* The leaders of the Revolution were panic-stricken. John Adams talked of shooting a General in order that other Generals might be taught a lesson. Nowhere was the alarm greater than in Vermont, which had declared its independence as a State and had adopted its constitution hurriedly when tidings came of the disasters at Hubbardton and Ticonderoga. The whole of Vermont was, of course, now exposed to the ravages of Burgoyne's army, and, as Hiland Hall remarks in his account of the Battle of Bennington, "Nearly all of the territory between Bennington and the route of Burgoyne towards the Hudson and Albany, was thus made, in effect, an enemy's country, and Bennington became a frontier town."

Burgoyne's policy had been to undermine the morale of the patriots, using every device to that end. Cajolery, bribery and terror were used with equal freedom. His proclamations breathed terror and threatened those who

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\*See *Burgoyne's Invasion of 1777*, by Samuel Adams Drake, from which this summary is taken.

resisted or disobeyed his commands with frightful penalties, while he promised security and reward to those who submitted to the Crown. Naturally, a great many of the inhabitants took the oath of allegiance. While it is not to be questioned or denied that a great many of those who did so acted from conviction, having no sympathy with or faith in the Revolution, it is certain that many others acted from prudence. They desired to protect themselves and their families in the possession of their property and their homes. But there were others who could neither be cajoled nor bribed to take the oath of submission and allegiance. Taking only such things as they could readily transport with their very limited facilities, they fled from their homes, some going to Connecticut, many more to Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and by far the greatest number to Bennington, where the patriot cause was strongest, and where protection against attack, whether by Tories or British troops, was better organized than anywhere else in the State. It was the center of resistance which had given Burgoyne increasing anxiety, and it had become evident that before long he would be compelled to make an effort to cope with it. Washington was by no means alone in the belief that Bennington County was a strategic point of primary importance. He was strongly averse to leaving it unprepared for defense or for cooperation in attack, as the case might be.

Since Ticonderoga and Hubbardton people throughout New England had lost their faith in the Generals of the

northern army, especially St. Clair and Schuyler. This attitude was particularly strong among the people of Vermont and New Hampshire, and it had a great deal to do in shaping their policy. When the leaders of Vermont called on New Hampshire for assistance in repelling the invader they had an easy task to show that this was for their self interest of the latter. It was no vicarious sacrifice that was asked by them. To help Vermont repel the invader was for New Hampshire merely a policy of commonsense. The Vermonters also strongly urged that such forces as New Hampshire might raise for that purpose should be placed under independent command, and not under the officers of the Continental Army, in whom they had no confidence or trust. What they feared was, of course, that if the forces raised by New Hampshire were not made thus independent, General Schuyler would take them away from the neighborhood of Bennington, away from Vermont, which they rightly believed to be in danger.

Their appeal fell upon ears that were extremely sympathetic. In the first place, there was the distrust of Schuyler and other northern army Generals. In the second place, John Stark, the pride of New Hampshire, who had served with distinction as Colonel at Bunker Hill against Howe, and under Washington at Trenton and Princeton, had resigned from the Continental Army and gone into retirement, piqued because he had been passed over in making promotions. There was already a certain glamour about his name. Rightly or wrongly, it was felt that he had been discriminated against for no

military reason but because he was a plain man of the people, without polish or social graces. The Vermonters had faith in Stark and saw in him just the type of leader needed for conducting military operations in their region. As a result of their urgings, New Hampshire decided to organize a large part of the militia of the State into a brigade and to place Stark in charge with the rank of General. The Council gave him such discretionary powers as made him independent of the northern army commanders. He was to take command of the troops, march into Vermont, and "there act in conjunction with the troops of that State, or any other of the States, or of the United States, or separately, as it should appear expedient to him, for the protection of the people or the annoyance of the enemy."

This most extraordinary procedure naturally displeased the leaders of the northern army. Congress even passed a vote of censure. It was not long before the wisdom of the action of the Government of New Hampshire was made manifest. It is now universally admitted by historians and military authorities that the independent command of Stark alone made possible the Bennington victory with all the momentous consequences of that event. It was the primary factor in the defeat of Burgoyne's army. It made it possible for Stark to display his natural aptitude for military leadership, and it gave him the necessary authority to decline to obey instructions from Schuyler which he believed to be fundamentally wrong in their conception of the strategy required.

Stark himself—always generously just in his acknowledgment of the services of others—has placed upon record the fact that the policy he followed in Vermont was the result of his conviction that the views and plans submitted to him by the Vermont Council of Safety were sound. The leaders of the Council of Safety stoutly contended that the logic of Burgoyne's position pointed to the inevitability of an effort by him to reach Bennington; that if Stark should join his forces with those of Schuyler at Stillwater, as desired by Schuyler, Vermont would be wholly unprotected, and, consequently, New Hampshire also imperilled; that, finally Stark could do a great deal more against Burgoyne by striking on his left flank than by joining the army in front.

When Stark reached Manchester, on August 7, with his troops, he was joined by Warner with the remnant of his regiment. He was also met by General Lincoln with orders to Stark from Schuyler to join him at Stillwater, and by the leaders of the Vermont Council of Safety from Bennington who urged him to decline to obey Schuyler's orders. The Bennington men presented their views with great earnestness and ability; General Lincoln was perhaps no less skillful or earnest. It would appear from a letter by one of Stark's captains—Peter Clark, of Lyndeboro, N. H.—that Lincoln had made the mistake of issuing an order to Stark's troops to march to Albany, without consulting Stark. This would undoubtedly have inclined Stark to reject Lincoln's plea in support of Schuyler's order. It is also morally certain that Stark was aware that on July 16 Schuyler had written to

Warner concerning some New Hampshire Militia under Captain Fitch which were supposed to be on the way to join him at Fort Edward, "It is not my intention, much as I am in want of troops, that they should come hither, as it would expose the country in that quarter to the depredations of the Enemy; I therefore enclose you an order for them to join you." Warner was then at Manchester, so that at that time Schuyler held views practically identical with those which the Vermont Council of Safety held.

Having decided his course, Stark resisted every pressure that Schuyler and Lincoln could bring upon him, and in this he was wisely and courageously upheld by the Government of New Hampshire. On August 9, accompanied by Seth Warner, Stark arrived at Bennington with his brigade. Warner's regiment of Continentals had been left at Manchester, under the command of Lieut.-Col. Samuel Safford, a Bennington man, in order to protect that point. For several days Stark was in constant consultation with the Council of Safety, and with Warner. Intelligence had to be obtained, munitions secured and plans developed. The Council of Safety had already done a vast amount of work—having regard to their situation and resources—besides the all important achievement of getting Stark's forces brought to Bennington. They had created a regiment of Rangers under the command of Samuel Herrick, a Bennington man, to patrol the frontiers and to suppress Tory activities. To provide the funds necessary for their defense, the Council, acting under the daring and wise leadership of Ira Allen, had

sequestered the property of inhabitants joining the enemy, selling it and applying the funds so obtained to the defense. This wise move not merely provided needed funds, but it materially checked the drift to the Crown forces. The Council of Safety also sent its agents into Berkshire County, Massachusetts, calling for assistance from there. Right nobly did Berkshire County respond with men and ammunition, and in the Battle of Bennington the Massachusetts men played a more important part than has been generally recognized.

It was during the night of August 13 that Stark received word of the approach of Baume's forces toward Bennington. Leaving to another chapter the account of subsequent events, we may at this point properly ask what it was that Baume's expedition sought to accomplish. What reason, military or political, led Burgoyne to order an attack upon the town? The answer is not far to seek. Burgoyne had long wanted to strike a blow at New England. This is made evident by the fact that he had asked for discretionary power to do so in a letter to the authorities in England, outlining his plans. He had been ordered, in reply, not to turn aside from his main object to march into New England. His recent successes, however, had given him good reason for believing that he was justified in going so far as to take Bennington, which was one of the most important points in New England, if not, indeed, the most important. He had the further justification that there was a considerable armed force at Bennington, and an even more formidable civil and

political force, which was a constant and a growing menace.

It is probable that for these reasons alone Burgoyne would have tried to crush the whole resistance of Vermont by a blow at Bennington, had no other more urgent reasons compelled him to do so. The fact was, however, that his triumphs had brought him into great difficulties. The one obstacle to his advance to Albany was the difficulty of getting supplies for his big army. Nobody but Tories would sell a pound of beef or an ear of corn for the purpose, and many of the Tories were afraid to do so lest it bring upon them the wrath of the ubiquitous agents of the Council of Safety. Moreover, raids upon the country by small detachments organized for the purpose were not very successful in getting supplies. Burgoyne himself has testified that the patriots in and around Bennington were as skillful as they were daring and active in driving away cattle and destroying other supplies to keep them out of the hands of Burgoyne's officers..

Except for an almost negligible quantity secured by raids or by purchase from Tories, every pound of meat and other provisions, including flour, had to be brought from Quebec to Skeneborough, and from thence to the camp. This involved a tremendously difficult problem of transport. It required an enormous number of horses, and the detachment of numerous guards to patrol the roads and guard the supplies. In many cases roads had to be repaired and made usable. Naturally, the farther his army got from Skeneborough the more difficult this problem became. Supplies must be had somehow or he

must recede and give up the advantages of territory gained.

At Bennington, the oldest and the most numerously populated of the Vermont settlements, was one of the most considerable and important supply bases of the northern army. That Burgoyne knew this his own dispatches and letters make evident. There is no question that the stores at Bennington were considerable. On the day of the Battle of Hubbardton, July 7, General St. Clair wrote, "I am now on my march to Bennington, which place I am obliged to make on account of provisions, the Enemy having last night possessed themselves of Skenesborough." On the following day, July 8, a "circular for aid" was sent out from Bennington, signed by Moses Robinson, Col., Nat'l Brush, Lt. Col., Joseph Farnsworth, Deputy Commissary, Elijah Dewey, Captain, John Fay, Chairman, which said: "Unless the enemy be soon stopped and repelled, the whole country will fall into their hands, which will prove the ruin of the whole country, as we have large stores deposited in this place which we shall of necessity be obliged to leave to the enemy and retreat down into the New England States, which will soon reduce the Country to 'cleanness of teeth.'" On the same day, July 8, St. Clair wrote to Schuyler, "I am in great distress for provisions. If I can be supplied at Manchester I shall proceed directly for Fort Edward, or Saratoga, as circumstances may direct; if not, I shall be obliged to go to Bennington." On July 15, a circular to Military Officers, signed by Ira Allen, Secretary of the Vermont Council of Safety, asking for

assistance to check the enemy in their advance, gave this reason, "The Continental stores in Bennington seem to be their present aim."

To the foregoing American evidence of the importance of the stores at Bennington we may well add the testimony of General Burgoyne. To Lord George Germaine, in England, his superior officer, under date of August 20, 1777, he wrote as follows:

"It is well known that the enemy's supplies in live cattle, from a large tract of country, passed by the route of Manchester, Arlington, and other parts of the Hampshire Grants, to Bennington, in order to be occasionally conveyed thence to the main army. A large deposit of corn and of wheel carriages was also formed at the same place, and the usual guard was militia, though it varied in numbers from day to day. A scheme was formed to surprise Bennington. The possession of the cattle and carriages would certainly have enabled the army to leave their distant magazines, and to have acted with energy and dispatch; success would also have answered many secondary purposes."

This extract from Burgoyne's letter to Lord Germaine not only completes the chain of evidence to prove that there were at Bennington stores of such magnitude as to make their possession important enough to be the objective of a formidable military expedition, but also proves that, while there may have been various "secondary purposes," among which we may place the breaking up of the military and civil resistance, the primary purpose was to capture

the stores. In the same letter Burgoyne gave the reasons which led him to decide upon the important step:

"Intelligence had reached me, that Lieutenant Colonel St. Leger was before Fort Stanwix, which was defended. The main army of the enemy opposed to me was at Stillwater, a place between Saratoga and the mouth of the Mohawk.

"A rapid movement forward appeared to be of the utmost consequence at this period. The enemy could not have proceeded up the Mohawk without putting themselves between two fires, in case Colonel St. Leger should have succeeded, and at best being cut off by my army from Albany. They must either, therefore, have stood an action, have fallen back toward Albany, or have passed the Hudson's River, in order to secure a retreat to New England, higher up. Which ever of these measures they had taken, so that the King's army had been enabled to advance, Colonel St. Leger's operations would have been assisted, a junction with him probably secured, and the whole country of the Mohawk opened. To maintain the communication with Fort George during such a movement, so as to be supplied by daily degrees at a distance continually increasing, was an obvious impossibility. The army was much too weak to have afforded a chain of posts. Escorts for every separate transport would have been a still greater drain; nor could any have been made so strong as to force their way through such positions as the enemy might take in one night's march from the White Creek, where they had a



WEIR DESIGN

*See Page 100*

numerous militia. Had the enemy remained supine, through fear, or want of comprehending so palpable an advantage, the physical impossibility of being supplied by degrees from Fort George was still in force, because a new necessity of land carriage for nine miles arises at Stillwater; and, in the proportion that carriages had been brought forward to that place, the transport must have ceased behind.

"The alternative, therefore, was short; either to relinquish the favorable opportunity of advancing upon the enemy, or to attempt other resources of supply."

It would be possible to cite much other testimony from the witness most competent to testify concerning Burgoyne's aims—General Burgoyne himself. But we have cited sufficient to prove, beyond any reasonable doubt or question, the following three propositions:

1. That General Burgoyne's situation involved him in great difficulty in the matter of getting supplies for his army.
2. That there were great stores at Bennington, of considerable importance to the Continental Army, possession of which by General Burgoyne would have vastly improved his position and been a severe blow to the Continental Army.
3. That the decision to send Baume's expedition was principally dictated by the desire to obtain these stores, and so be in a position to make a march upon Albany.

In reviewing the evidence given by various witnesses at the investigation of his conduct of the war by the

Committee of the House of Commons, in 1779, General Burgoyne wrote the following words, with which we may well conclude this discussion:

"Had a proper store of live cattle been obtained by the expedition to Bennington, (and bye the bye it will be remembered, that had the loyalists of the country been really of the number and description represented, that acquisition might have been made without an action) all the carriages might have been appropriated solely to the conveyance of flour, hospital accommodations, entrenching tools, and other absolute necessities; and a rapid march to Albany might have been hazarded."

Burgoyne had trusted too much to reports concerning the strength of the Tories in and around Bennington. He had been led to believe that the greater part of those who professed to be with the rebel cause were at heart loyalists and would assert their real feelings as soon as a considerable force of the King's army appeared. Even the troops under Stark and Warner were expected to prove to be seriously disaffected. Most bitterly and repeatedly did Burgoyne lament afterward the extent to which he had relied upon these reports. There can be no doubt that the Tories were exceedingly numerous, even in and around Bennington. There was by no means the almost universal unity in the revolt against British rule that we of this generation are inclined to believe. But the leaders of the movement in Bennington were strong and stern men, who did not hesitate to resort to desperate measures in order to intimidate and crush the Tories in their midst. In that fact lay the undoing of Burgoyne.

In closing this chapter we may be pardoned for recurring, briefly, to the old discussion about the name borne by the battle of August 16, 1777. We have already seen in an earlier chapter how the name came into use and has the sanction of long usage. Surely it is not less pertinent to the subject to point out that, as we have demonstrated, Bennington was the objective of Baume, the stake for which the battle was fought. Nor it is less pertinent to remind the reader that all the preparations for the battle were made at Bennington by the leaders of the Vermont patriots living in Bennington. They brought about the organization of Stark's brigade by the Government of New Hampshire; they caused Stark's command to be made independent; they convinced Stark that Bennington was the vital point; they raised the funds essential for the struggle; they induced the men of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, to come into the fight.

If ever the name commonly applied to a battle was justified by every consideration of reason and propriety, we may confidently make that claim for the Battle of Bennington.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BATTLE AND ITS RESULTS

It is not our intention to give any detailed description of the Battle of Bennington in these pages. The barest outline of the essential facts must suffice. There are numerous accounts of the battle, its strategy, and its place in the War of Independence, which can be consulted by those who desire more complete information than is here given.

On August 13, 1777, Stark, at Bennington, received information from his scouts that a party of Indians was at Cambridge, and he at once dispatched one of the officers of his brigade, Lieut.-Col. Gregg, with a body of two hundred men, to deal with the Indians. That same night he was informed that a large body of troops, with artillery, was in the rear of the Indians, marching toward Bennington. It is claimed that this important message was brought to Stark by one John Weir, of Cambridge. Practically all of Weir's relatives were Tories, it is said, and through them he learned of Baume's intention. Weir was an expert rifleman, one of the crack shots of the district. Leaving "as fine a field of wheat as ever grew," he seized his rifle, mounted his horse, and rode off to Bennington to warn Stark. According to tradition, Weir

joined Stark's forces and rendered a good account of himself in the battle.\*

Acting on the information received, Stark marched with his men early on the morning of August 14, accompanied by Colonels Warner, Herrick, Brush and Williams—all Vermonters, and all except Williams from Bennington. At the same time, he sent messengers to Manchester to summon Warner's regiment of Continentals, which had been left there in charge of Lieut.-Col. Safford, and to rally all the militia in the neighborhood. They set forth to meet the enemy and had gone some five miles when they met Gregg, who was retreating from Sancoick with the enemy in pursuit. Stark at once drew up his forces in battle array, but Baume did not advance to attack. Instead, he took up a strong position and halted there. Stark, seeing that his position was an unfavorable one, and that Baume's position was an exceedingly strong one, drew back about a mile and there camped for the night. His camping ground, which is marked by a simple granite marker, lay within the town of Bennington.

That night, having ascertained the position of the enemy and the nature of Baume's preparations, Stark called a Council of War. This was attended by leading members of the Council of Safety, Warner, Herrick and other officers, Stark presiding. It was decided that the

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\*This story is given with all due reserve. It was published in the *Troy Times*, August 5, 1891, on the authority of Mr. H. King Fisher. The present writer has been unable to find any verification of it, but it is neither impossible nor improbable.

best policy would be to attack Baume's position early the next morning, without waiting for Warner's regiment to arrive, but depending on these to arrive later in the day. That same night, in a drenching rain, the first lot of men from Berkshire County, Massachusetts, arrived. With them was the redoubtable "fighting parson," Rev. Thomas Allen of Pittsfield. He had been indignant at the evacuation of Ticonderoga, which he regarded as cowardice and denounced in scathing terms. When the messengers from Bennington reached Pittsfield, calling for volunteers to join Stark at Bennington, Parson Allen rallied the men of Pittsfield to the "meeting house" and addressed them with fervor. "All of you who will go to meet the enemy, follow me!" he cried. He left Pittsfield very soon after with twenty-two others, seventeen more following the next day. They gathered other volunteers as they went along.

Arrived in Bennington, Allen and his companions at once reported to Stark. "Here we are with our men from Berkshire. We have been frequently called out, but have never been led against the enemy. We have now resolved, if you will not let us fight, never to turn out again." To this earnest speech Stark made answer no less earnest: "You would not march now, in the dark and rain, would you?" he asked. "No, not just this minute," replied the parson. "Then if the Lord once more gives us sunshine, and I do not give you a chance to fight, I will never ask you to come again," rejoined the General.

But when the morning came it was still raining in tor-

rents and it was out of the question to begin the attack as planned. During the day some of the scouts that were sent out had skirmishes with enemy scouts, several of whom were killed but these skirmishes were of no real consequence. Stark meantime was chafing at the delay, for he was quite well aware that reinforcements to assist Baume might be on the way. But the same rain that postponed his attack, and that had retarded Warner's regiment, delayed the arrival of the reinforcements for which Baume had actually sent. We are fortunately in possession of exact information concerning these, for in the inquiry by the House of Commons concerning General Burgoyne's conduct of the war, Lieut. Col. Kingston, adjutant general of the army under Burgoyne and his personal secretary, was questioned on the subject and in his reply introduced the original memorandum, in the handwriting of Sir Francis Clarke. The memorandum notes that on August 15, an "Express arrived, from Sancoick, at five in the morning; corps de reserve ordered to march." Colonel Breyman and his force, then at Battenkill, received marching orders and at eight o'clock started on their way. The force consisted of two officers and 620 men, all Germans, with two cannon. The total distance to be covered was only some twenty-four miles but the roads were almost impassable and progress was slow. Breyman said that at times it was all they could do to make progress at the rate of two hours to the mile.

Warner's men were little better off. Although orders had been received at Manchester on the morning of Aug-

ust 14, the regiment did not leave until the following morning. The delay is said to have been due to the fact that a large scouting party under Captain John Chipman had not returned in time to leave on the 14th. The regiment left in a driving rainstorm and its progress was slow. It was almost midnight when the little force of Continentals reached the outskirts of Bennington. On the following morning, Saturday, the men had to spend some hours drying their arms and equipment and securing a supply of ammunition, and noon was past when the regiment left Bennington. At Stark's encampment they stopped for a brief rest, and to leave their coats and knapsacks. Rum and water was served to the men and they marched to join Stark.

Before Lieut. Col. Safford and his men of Warner's regiment arrived on the scene Stark had attacked and the battle was on in earnest. The engagement began "precisely at three o'clock in the afternoon," as Stark in his precise manner reported to the New Hampshire Council. The General had waited as long as he dared for Warner's men to arrive. Their number was not considerable. Of the regiment proper there were about 140 men, but the message that brought them had urged that all militia in the vicinity join with them. We may well believe that the Continentals were joined by some militia, but the force so augmented was probably well under two hundred men. Stark's chief concern seems to have been to have Warner's Continentals in action for the reason that, as seasoned soldiers who had been in action and gone through defeat, they would have a steady influence upon the

raw and untried men composing the major part of his force. Not daring to wait longer, and so incur the risk of having to face a foe greatly strengthened by reinforcements, at three o'clock Stark ordered the attack.

When the Berkshire men under Colonel Rossiter left their encampment that morning, according to well authenticated record, as the adjutant was about to give them their place in the field, Parson Allen stepped forth and said, "We will do our fighting in good time, but we will first join in prayer." Then he prayed that God would "teach their hands to war and their fingers to fight." The spirit of that prayer might well have inspired all Stark's little army. Raw and untrained yeomen and militia, opposed by trained soldiers, including some of the very best of Burgoyne's fine army, they fought with indomitable energy and unflinching courage.

For the first hour and a half the entrenched enemy held its own, the Americans making little progress. At half past four, in the face of a terrific hail of bullets, Stark's men gained the crest of the hill. The next half hour appears from the accounts of participants to have been a period of confusion and close, hand to hand fighting. The enemy used bayonets, rifle butts, sabres and pikes in this stage of the fighting. The Americans were much less well equipped and many a weapon dropped by a fallen British or German soldier, or wrenched from his hand, was made to serve the American cause. At five o'clock in the afternoon the defeated foe turned and fled, abandoning their artillery—two brass cannon—and their baggage. For about a mile they were pursued by the

Americans, Stark and Warner leading. The engagement, which Stark himself described in his report to General Gates as "the hottest I ever saw in my life"—a significant statement in view of his extended experience—was at an end with victory on the side of the American yeomen.

Most of Baume's forces were killed, wounded or captured. Baume himself was mortally wounded and taken prisoner, as was Colonel Pfister, the commander of the Tories. A number of other officers were killed, while others were made prisoners. The victory was complete, and yet, as we shall see, it came very near to being turned into a calamitous and disastrous defeat. A second engagement had to be fought that day, and it brought the Americans perilously near to disaster.

The second engagement arose in the following manner: In his original instructions to Baume, General Burgoyne had wisely warned him of the possibility of finding himself in precisely the predicament in which he did find himself. Colonel Skene and other advisers had represented that, while there was a certain armed force at Bennington, it was not dependable and would not offer resistance; that the overwhelming sentiment of the people was in full sympathy with the Crown, and that they were waiting only for such an opportunity as the arrival of a force from the King's army to openly show their allegiance; that in these circumstances, the desired stores could be had without an action at all. Of course, Burgoyne desired to believe this and, in the circumstances, getting this information from those whom he had a right to believe might know, and ought to know,

there was some justification—perhaps sufficient justification—for making the experiment. Two or three brief quotations will suffice to present the theory upon which he acted:

“\* \* \* in the situation of the transport service at that time, the army could barely be victualled from day to day \* \* \* the idea of an expedition to Bennington originated upon this difficulty, combined with the intelligence reported by General Reisedel, and with all I had otherwise received.”

“I knew that Bennington was the great deposit of corn, flour, and store cattle; that it was guarded only by militia; and every day's account tended to confirm the persuasion of the loyalty of one description of the inhabitants and the panic of the other. Those who knew the country best were most sanguine in this persuasion.”

“I undertook the expedition to Bennington upon report, strengthened by the suggestion of *persons of long experience and residence in America; who had been present on the spot when the rebellion broke out;* and whose information had been much respected by the administration in England; *that the friends to the British cause were as five to one, and that they wanted only the appearance of a protecting force to shew themselves.*”

In another place he stresses the fact that “had the loyalists of the country been really of the number and description represented” the desired stores of cattle, flour,

carriages and other necessaries would have been obtained by the Bennington expedition "without an action."\*

But Burgoyne, whatever his faults, was too good a soldier and general to neglect ordinary precautions. He instructed Baume to be very careful. He was to keep Burgoyne informed. He must report to Burgoyne whether the road used by him is a practicable one, and "if it is convenient for a considerable corps with cannon." Moreover, Baume is warned against exactly what occurred:

"Should you find the enemy too strongly posted at Bennington, and maintaining such a countenance as may make an attack imprudent, I wish you to take a post where you can maintain yourself till you receive an answer from me; and I will either support you in force or withdraw you."

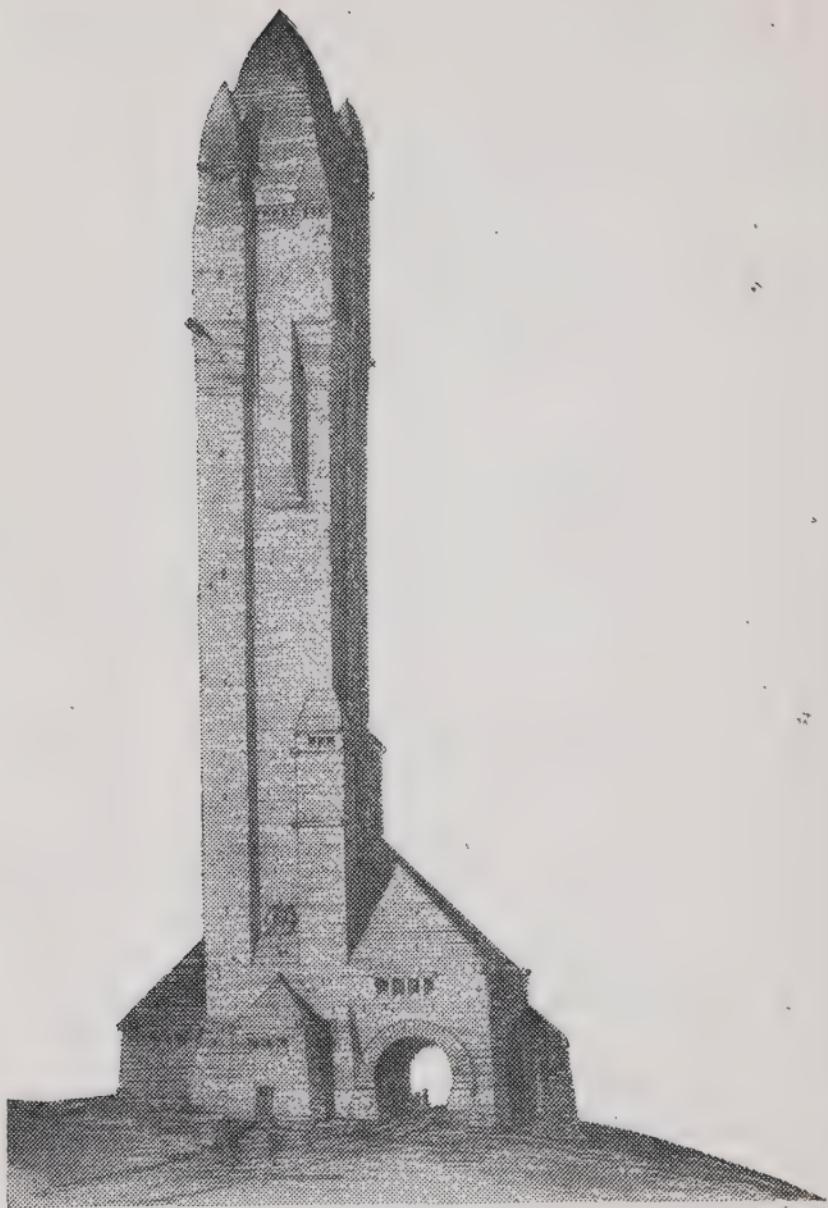
As we have already seen, Baume tried to carry out these instructions. He did not open the attack. He took a strong position and proceeded to entrench himself, having sent off for reinforcements as soon as he learned the strength and belligerent attitude of the Americans. Further, as soon as Baume's messenger reached the camp with the request for reinforcements, at five in the morning, Sir Francis Clarke was hurried at once to Battenkill with orders to Colonel Breyman, that being the nearest point at which there was a force to send. At eight o'clock

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\*These quotations are all from Burgoyne's *A State of the Expedition*, 1780.

Breyman started with 620 men and two cannon. Burgoyne could not be accused either of lack of foresight or of procrastination. He could not have foreseen that Colonel Breyman and his men would take from eight o'clock in the morning of Friday to after five o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday to cover twenty-four miles. He had a right to believe that he had sufficiently warned Baume against proceeding too far to have a safe retreat; that he had made proper arrangements for reinforcement to be sent; that he had sent the reinforcements in sufficient time to save Baume from any danger. As we know, Baume went too far for safety and Breyman, impeded by the same weather conditions that so nearly kept Warner's regiment out of the battle, with possible disaster to Stark, did not arrive in time. Baume's force had held out as long as possible.

Now, as soon as Stark's army realized that the foe was routed its lack of discipline manifested itself. Stark had promised that in the event of victory all who fought under his command should share the plunder. Whatever there was in the way of baggage, clothing, equipment, supplies, and the like, the men were to be free to share. Here is what happened: A certain number of men had to be sent back to Bennington with the captured prisoners; others were told off to bear away the wounded as rapidly as possible. Colonel Baume, mortally wounded by a shot in the abdomen, was carried to a house in Shaftsbury, a mile and a half away. Many of the wounded of both sides were taken back to Bennington in ox-carts. And among the first tasks was the collecting



RINN'S BIG TOWER  
*See Page 103*

ot the bodies of the dead patriots, particularly of those whose homes were in or near Bennington.

It can readily be understood that these tasks required the services of a good many men, and that they inevitably occasioned some confusion. Then there was the searching for and gathering together of the plunder, to which a large part of the force was devoting itself when Breyman's force appeared, taking Stark by surprise. One of the Benningtoni men, Silas Warner, in an account of the day's events, declared that as Breyman's grenadiers and rifle men rushed to the attack some of the American officers were ordering "forward" while the others were ordering "retreat." Stark himself is said to have ordered the men to retreat, but the order was countermanded by Seth Warner, who cried, "Stand to it my lads; you shall have help immediately!" Colonel Rossiter, from Richmond, Massachusetts, played a heroic part in rallying the Americans. The two brass cannon that Baume's forces had left behind were placed in position, but so inexperienced were the troops that Stark himself had to show how to load and fire them. These cannon were used against Breyman's force with some effect but the two cannon the latter had brought were of larger calibre and more effective.

Not all of the Americans who had participated in the first engagement were present at this time. Alarmed, Stark had sent after them and also sent messengers to ride the countryside seeking for reinforcements. Soon, however, something like order had been restored and the little army rallied. It was a defensive fight that they were

waging now, and, contesting every inch of the ground, they were slowly but surely falling back under the strong attack. At this juncture Warner's regiment of Continentals arrived, and their presence had the effect of restoring the shattered morale of the little army of patriots. Something like 40 or 50 rods east of the spot where the Walloomsac railway station now is, the Americans took up their stand and brought Breyman's force to a halt. The fighting was quite as severe in this second engagement as in the first. Many of Breyman's men were wounded, and some killed, many of his horses were shot down. Sunset was already past and darkness was gathering when Breyman gave up the fight. Abandoning his cannon but taking most of his wounded, he fled with all that remained of his force. General Stark ordered his men in pursuit, but called them in when it became unsafe on account of approaching darkness for the pursuit to be carried further. There was danger that in the dark his men would kill one another. "With one hour more of daylight we should have taken the whole body of them," wrote Stark.

Stark's force of perhaps 2500 men, mostly militia and volunteers, had fought two engagements of a stubborn character, overcoming two forces numbering about 1400 disciplined and well trained troops, among them the finest flower of the British army and its hired ally. This had been accomplished with small loss, the casualties on the American side being about 30 killed and 40 wounded. This was a small price to pay for the results attained. The Brunswick commander, Baume, was

mortally wounded and dying, and so was the most aggressive and notorious of the leaders of the Tories, Colonel Francis Pfister, the wealthy half-pay British officer whose mansion was near the place now called Hoosick Corners. The enemy had left more than 200 dead upon the field. The number of enemy dead on the field reported by Stark on August 18 was 207, but the actual total is believed to have been somewhat greater. There is a local tradition that additional bodies were discovered from time to time during the weeks following the battle. The total number of killed may well have reached 225. The enemy prisoners, including those wounded, numbered 750, among them being 40 officers, 3 surgeons and a chaplain. The victors were left with four cannon belonging to the enemy, some seven hundred stand of arms, four ammunition wagons, 250 sabres, twelve brass-barreled drums and a number of horses.

But the importance of the victory is not to be measured by these results, considerable as they were. Had the Battle of Bennington no other significance than these figures imply it would rank only as one of many battles fought during the Revolution, a victory to be remembered and celebrated with local pride, but not to be distinguished above numerous other minor battles. The first immediate effect of Stark's victory was, of course, the frustration of Burgoyne's cherished plan for a quick march upon Albany. It was at once the effective and adequate protection of the most vulnerable point in the whole northern department of the American army and a tremendous addition to the difficulties in which the erstwhile trium-

phant Burgoyne was enmeshed. The victory was also immediately important in its effect upon the morale of the patriots and of the foe. To the patriots, coming as it did after the long and unbroken chain of discouraging events, it was inspiring and invigorating. The bells of Boston pealed forth in rejoicing when the news became known, and people thronged the streets singing and cheering to express their happiness.

Washington was among the first to hail the victory and to sense its fundamental importance. With matchless patience and fortitude he had endured the long chain of disasters to the cause, and now saw the turning of the tide. He had long believed in and urged precisely the strategy that Stark with his splendid military instinct and understanding had conceived and followed. He now saw that Stark's victory brought within reach the crushing of Burgoyne: "As there is not now the least danger of General Howe's going to New England," he wrote to Putnam, "I hope the whole force of that country will turn out, and, by following the great stroke struck by General Stark near Bennington, entirely crush General Burgoyne, who by his letter to Colonel Baume seems to be in want of almost everything." That wish was to be fulfilled at an early date.

The Congress which censured the Council of New Hampshire for its action in making Stark independent in his command, and had indirectly censured Stark himself, was all unaware when it passed the resolution of censure, on August 19, that three days previously Stark had won a victory that had changed the whole aspect of the war in

the northern department. In the debate on that resolution its passage was stoutly opposed by the New Hampshire delegates. They boldly justified Stark's independent command by saying that the militia of the State had lost all faith in the officers of the general army, and that they would not turn out nor be commanded by such officers. They informed the Congress that they "had not the least doubt but that the first battle they heard of from the North would be fought by Stark and the troops commanded by him." Had Congress waited a single day the vote of censure would never have been passed, for on the day following its action, August 20, it received word of Stark's victory from General Schuyler. On October 4 Congress voted thanks to Stark and his officers and men and made Stark himself a Brigadier General in the United States Army.

The rest of the story is soon told. The victory won in the Battle of Bennington made the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga not only probable, but inevitable. "Bennington \* \* \* proved to be the turning point of the Saratoga campaign which was the turning point of the war," says one of the greatest of all the English historians of the American Revolution.\* Thus the Battle of Bennington holds a place in the history of the world among those events of critical importance of which a contrary happening would have materially changed the course of the subsequent history of the nation and of mankind. If this appears to be too high an estimate of

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\*Trevelyan, *American Revolution*, Part II. Vol. II., pp. 123-4.

the importance of the Battle of Bennington, let the reader reflect upon the fact that, in the judgment of all the most competent historians, Stark's victory was the cause of Burgoyne's failure, and led to the surrender at Saratoga. Bearing that unchallenged judgment in mind, let him then ponder the words of Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy, the English historian, concerning Burgoyne's defeat and surrender:

"Nor can any military event be said to have exercised more important influence on the future fortunes of mankind than the complete defeat of Burgoyne's Expedition in 1777; a defeat which rescued the revolted colonists from certain subjection, and which, by inducing the courts of France and Spain to attack England in their behalf, insured the independence of the United States, and the formation of that transatlantic power which not only America, but both Europe and Asia now see and feel."\*

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\**Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World.* American edition,  
p. 312.

## CHAPTER V

### THE OPPOSING FORCES

Perhaps no questions concerning the battle have been the subject of more discussion and disputation than that of the number of troops engaged on either side, and that of the strength and composition of Stark's army. Certain writers who have denied the fitness of the name, Battle of Bennington, have declared that the battle was fought in New York, by New Hampshire men, and Vermont's only association with it is the fact that it has the monument commemorating it. This spiteful taunt can have no power to annoy or irritate the Vermonter who knows his history. Vermonters do not deny that New Hampshire furnished the greater part of the fighting force, as well as the indomitable and victorious leader. Neither do they deny that Massachusetts played an important part in sending both men and munitions. There is no jealousy with regard to these facts. On the contrary, they add to the warmth of the Vermonters' enthusiasm for they confirm the belief that the memorable battle was not merely a local affair, a minor incident, but was, and was at the time recognized to be, vital to New England and, indeed, to the whole nation.

How many men did Colonel Baume have under his command on that eventful day upon the heights of Wal-

loomsac? So far as is now known, there is no precise and absolutely reliable information upon the point. In the first place, there is the fact that in his famous letter to the British Minister, Lord George Germaine, August 20, Burgoyne states that the original expedition, Colonel Baume's force, amounted to "about 500 men." This force was made up, according to Burgoyne, as follows: 200 dismounted dragoons of General Reisedel's regiment, Captain Fraser's marksmen, all British, but the number not stated, all the Canadian volunteers, a party of Provincials, or Tories, 100 Indians and two light cannon. It is the concensus of the opinion of historians and military authorities that the total force was greatly in excess of Burgoyne's statement that it consisted of "about five hundred men." Positive figures, however are lacking. Hiland Hall's opinion was that "the number of men brought into action by Baume exceeded 700, besides his 100 Indians." That is no more than a guess, however, and must be regarded as such. Other guesses have placed the number much higher—above 1000 men.

We know from a letter of Baume to Burgoyne, dated August 12, 1777, that after the expedition set out, while it was resting at Battenkill, it was reinforced by fifty German marksmen. That would raise the number from "about five hundred" to "about five hundred and fifty," even if Burgoyne's figures are accepted without question or challenge. The full enrollment of the dragoon regiment is known to have comprised 307 men and non-commissioned officers and 20 commissioned officers. However, there is no evidence to show that the entire regiment

was sent, and in any event the regiment would not be likely to be one hundred per cent effective. Always there must be deductions made for vacancies in the ranks due to death, illness, desertions and other causes. Then there are the men on special assignments, detached for the time being from the effective regimental strength. If however, we assume that there were only 200 of the dismounted dragoons and twenty officers, it still appears probable that Baume's force was considerably in excess of the figures given by Burgoyne.

We do not know how many Canadians were embraced in the term "all the Canadian volunteers" used in Burgoyne's letter, but we do know that 38 Canadians were among the prisoners taken that day and brought to Bennington. It is certain that there were some Canadians killed, and it is believed that some escaped. In any case, it would appear to be a most conservative figure to place the number of Canadians at sixty, at least. We know that there were no Canadians among the reinforcements which appeared and caused the second engagement, so we are making no mistake when we credit all the Canadians to Baume's original force. Burgoyne's letter does not give the number included in "a party of Provincials," but we are not wholly without information on the point. We know, for example, that the party must have been of considerable size, for at one stage, as appears from Burgoyne's letter to Colonel Skene, he contemplated sending it to Bennington by itself. We know also, that, in the amendments which Burgoyne made in the original plan for the expedition, in his own handwriting appear several

references to the *Provincials*, as "Colonel Peters' corps," assigning to them most important positions. We know, also, that there were Tories among the dead left on the field, and that there were 155 of them taken as prisoners and brought to Bennington. As the reinforcements which came later under Breyman were not *Provincials*, we can assign them all to Baume's force with perfect confidence. If we add to the fact that there were 155 Tory prisoners taken, the fact that—although no separate count was made—it was well known that there were many Tory dead (which would be a legitimate inference, even if there were no testimony on the point) and then make any reasonable allowance for those who escaped, we are obliged to conclude that the Tory force amounted to at least 250 men. It does not follow that Burgoyne knew the exact strength of this part of Baume's force, for it is well within the scope of probability that many voluntarily joined in after the expedition set out and while it was on its way.

We do not know the number of Captain Fraser's marks-men, for all Burgoyne's dispatches and letters are silent upon the point. We do know that there were many red-coated British soldiers slain that day, and we do know that 37 were brought to the Bennington Meeting House as prisoners. We know that this unit of Baume's force was made up of volunteers from the British regiments. It is hardly likely that it consisted of less than 75 men.

If we assume these figures to be a reasonable close approximation, we have a total force of about 775, in-

cluding the 100 Indians. This is a very close approach to the estimate of Hiland Hall\* and is considerably in excess of Burgoyne's statement, which the present writer regards as a demonstrable under-statement.

Because by far the greater part of the German mercenaries who fought for Great Britain against the American patriots in the War of Independence were Hessians, it became the common practice to describe all the Germans as "Hessians," and in practically every account of the Battle of Bennington the forces of both Baume and Breyman are so described. Even Hiland Hall invariably so refers to them. They are so referred to in the admirable writings of the late Henry D. Hall, of Bennington, one of the most painstaking and competent of all the students of our local history. In the great celebrations at Bennington in 1877 and 1891 every speaker, without exception, referred to the "Hessians" in the Battle of Bennington. In point of fact, there were no "Hessians" there, or, if any, not more than a few who had somehow found their way into a non-Hessian regiment. Both Baume and Breyman, and the men who fought under them likewise were Brunswickers, not Hessians.

The point is of some importance, and in any case it is just as well to have historical records accurate. At the end of 1775, Colonel William Faulet, of the Guards,

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\*One of the most careful of writers, Governor Hall, fell into a peculiar error. He credited to Baume's force all the "Hessian" (*sic*) prisoners and dead. Unless we are to assume that Breyman's force sustained no casualties, the error is obvious.

was sent to Germany to make the treaties by which German troops were to be secured for service under the British flag in North America. On January 9, 1776, he concluded a treaty with the Duke of Brunswick providing for 4000 men all told. On January 15, he signed a treaty with the Elector of Hesse, Frederic II, providing for 12,500 men, and so well was the treaty carried out that 12,054 were actually sent. The treaty with Hesse-Hanau, which was signed February 5, provided for 900 men. There was an earlier treaty, that with Waldeck, providing for 750 men, which was signed as early as April 25, 1775.

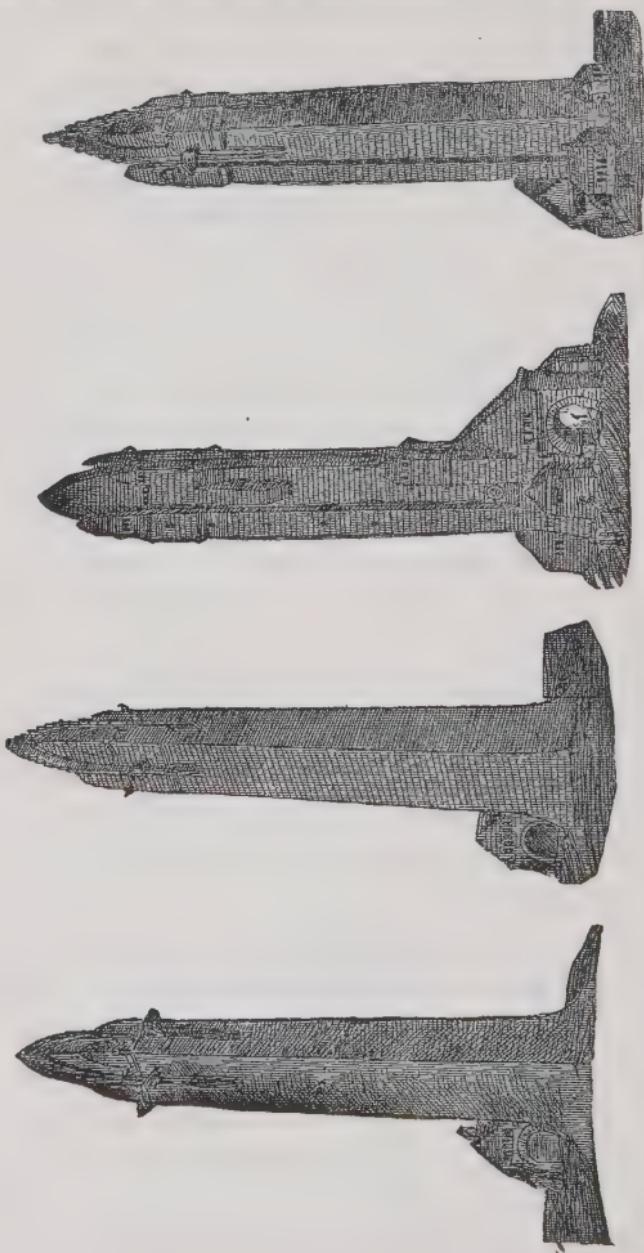
Baume's force, then, consisted of Brunswickers and American Tories in very nearly equal numbers, aided by British marksmen, Canadian volunteers and 100 Indians, who practically all fled at the beginning of the fight. Against these was opposed Stark's force, the exact numerical strength of which cannot be ascertained. We know from the New Hampshire pay-rolls that the number of men in Stark's brigade was 1523. There is abundant evidence that they were all at Bennington. These are the only authentic and official figures. We do not know how many troops were furnished by Vermont, but the number was probably below rather than above 500. Herrick's Rangers is sometimes stated to have amounted to 300 men, but that is probably an over-estimate. The present writer knows of no reliable authority for the estimate. It is not improbable that at the time of the battle, when it had been augmented by straggling volunteers, he had close to 150 men in his unit. These would

all be Vermonters. To these we may add the remnant of Warner's regiment, 140 men, 76 men in Captain Robinson's company of militia, the roll of which has been preserved, a similar number in Captain Dewey's company, the roll of which was not preserved, and, say 30 men in the company of Colonel (sometimes styled "Captain") Williams, the result is about 475 men. This is probably not far from the mark. At any rate, it is safe to say that Vermont did not furnish more than 500 men.

The number of Massachusetts men who participated in the battle must also be conjectured, for precise data are lacking. The number is sometimes placed as low as 150 and sometimes at 250. The writer is confident that both these estimates are too low. He long since reached this conclusion by a study of the available records. He is strongly inclined to the opinion that there were almost, if not quite, as many men from Berkshire County as from Vermont. In general, he believes that the part played by Massachusetts men in the battle has been underestimated. The reasons for this are fairly obvious and need not here be enlarged upon. Let us take a few illustrations from the data upon which this estimate of the strength of the Massachusetts troops is based: Colonel Ben. Simonds, of the North Berkshire Regiment of Militia, was in Bennington in consultation with Stark and the Council of Safety in advance of the Battle. He lived just a mile north of Williamstown village. From South Williamstown, the less populous part of the town, Captain Clark's company went to Bennington in full time for the battle, 65 men, according to the pay-roll still

*See Page 105*

VARIOUS PROFILES OF RINN'S BIG TOWER



extant. The present writer does not know whether the pay-roll for the men who went from the north part of the town, the more populous part has been discovered. It is not likely that less went from there than from the less populated south part. We know that there was a company in the north part of the town, commanded by Captain Nehemiah Smedley, and we know that Captain Smedley was in the Battle of Bennington. Captain Jonathan Danforth, who was in the Battle of Bunker Hill, was also in the Battle of Bennington.

There is an old and well accredited tradition that practically all the able-bodied men from Williamstown were at Bennington: "Every man in this town, except a cripple on crutches, shouldered his gun and rushed to the field of conflict," declared the Rev. Mr. Noble in his Williamstown Centennial Address." The same authority tells us that the booming of the cannon could be distinctly heard at Williamstown that memorable afternoon. We must remember that many of the families from Bennington and farther north had fled to Williamstown for safety on the receipt of news of Baume's approach, and it is easy to understand why the women of Williamstown, together with these strangers in their midst, repaired to the Meeting House to pray, just as was done at Bennington and elsewhere. At a subsequent time the General Court of Massachusetts voted to reimburse the town of Williamstown for powder, balls and flints from the town's stock expended at Bennington. Certainly, Williamstown was well represented.

From New Ashford went Captain Amariah Babbitt

and 19 men, the roll being still extant. Lanesboro sent 46 men under Captain Daniel Brown. They were mustered in on August 14, and that they reached the scene in time for the battle we know, for two of their lieutenants, Isaac Nash and Abel Prindle, were killed. The General Court of Massachusetts afterwards voted to reimburse Lanesboro for 160 pounds of powder, 580 pounds of lead for bullets, and 240 flints, expended from the town stock at the Battle of Bennington. Hancock sent Captain William Douglas with 26 men, and the pay roll has been preserved. Captain Samuel Low took 44 men from Cheshire, being called out on August 14. The place of the actual battle is about eighteen miles distant. From New Providence, otherwise Stafford's Hill, in Cheshire, Captain Joab Stafford went forth with 41 men. That they were in the battle we may safely assume from the fact that Captain Stafford himself was wounded there. The General Court of Massachusetts reimbursed New Providence for 40 pounds of powder, 120 pounds of lead and 60 flints used in the Battle of Bennington, and East Hoosick for 50 pounds of powder, 150 pounds of lead and 72 flints.

From Adams Captain Enos Parker and his company belonging to Colonel Simonds' regiment, took 51 men. From Pittsfield came the men of Colonel Brown's regiment, among them Thomas Allen, the picturesque "fighting parson." Under Lieutenant William Ford 22 men set forth the first day, followed on the next by 17 more. We know that the first lot, at least, arrived on time. Richmond sent Captain Aaron Rawley and 26 men, in-

cluding Lieut. Col. David Rossiter, who played a gallant part in the fight. Captain Ashley's regiment, of Stockbridge, seems to have furnished 38 men who were at Bennington days in advance of the battle. There were volunteers from Lenox, too, it is said, though the present writer knows of no roll of their names. Finally, there was the little band of Stockbridge Indians under Captain Solomon.

This is a very imperfect list of the incomplete records which have been preserved.\* Beyond any reasonable doubt, there were many others who hastened from Berkshire County to Bennington in response to the call of Stark and the Council of Safety. On the other hand, due account must be given to, and proper allowance made for, the statement of contemporaries, and generally believed, that many Massachusetts men arrived after the battle was over, too late to participate. Nevertheless, admitting so much, if we take into account only those bodies of whose presence and participation in the battle we have reasonably dependable evidence, it is apparent that there must have been almost, if not quite, as many men from Massachusetts as from Vermont.

If these estimates are reasonably correct, as the present writer confidently believes them to be, Stark must

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\*For practically all of this data the writer is indebted to the research of the late Prof. Arthur Latham Perry, of Williams College, who took a keen interest in the building of the Bennington Battle Monument and was one of the small group of men who successfully struggled against the acceptance of the Weir design, discussed later in this volume.

have had at least 2500 men under his command that day. This is higher by about 250 than the estimate which has been generally accepted. It must be admitted that the higher estimate involves a difficulty which the lower one does not involve. Stark had given his promise to the men under him that at the close of the fight, if victorious, they should share the plunder among themselves—a promise that almost brought tragic defeat. In the diary of Captain Peter Kimball, of Boscawen, New Hampshire, one of Stark's officers, it is recorded that the plunder taken at Bennington was divided among 2250 men. From that statement it might be inferred that the number given was the total strength of Stark's force. Is it likely that any considerable number of those participating would be absent when the plunder was being shared?

It is better to face the difficulty than to attempt to evade it. While giving all due importance to Captain Kimball's statement, it cannot be held to exclude the possibility that Stark had more than that number of men under him that day; in the writer's opinion it does not even create any strong presumption that the number given as sharing the plunder was inclusive of all who served under Stark that day. In the first place, there is no record that any roll call was had on the field. The very number given—an even 2250—suggests an estimate rather than an actual count, for it would be strange indeed if actual count had revealed the presence of such a convenient even number. It is not improbable, therefore, that Captain Kimball recorded, in round numbers,

the estimate either of himself or some other person. Moreover, it is known that there was great confusion, and it is not at all unlikely that not a few men who were entitled to share the plunder were absent when it was shared. Be these things how they may, the writer finds himself confronted by a mass of evidence which compels him to believe that Stark's force was higher by some two hundred and fifty men than is generally believed.

Greatly superior to the enemy in numbers as were the American forces, the contest was far less unequal than the figures by themselves would indicate. By far the greater part of Stark's troops were raw and untrained men, while Baume's were mostly well trained soldiers, for even the Tories had, for the most part, been some time in service with the army of Burgoyne. Baume's force was well disciplined and it was splendidly equipped. Many of the volunteers fighting under Stark had come to Bennington armed with scythes and axes for want of better weapons. Baume had two cannon, while Stark had none. Finally, Baume's forces were strongly entrenched in a position that lent itself well to defense and was correspondingly difficult to assail.

The greater part of Stark's forces wore no uniforms at all, but the ordinary working clothes of hardworking farmers. Warner's men appear to have worn the uniform of the Continental Army, while Herrick's rangers are said to have worn a green uniform trimmed with red. The British and perhaps also the Canadians under Baume wore the red coats of the British Army, while the Brunswickers wore the elaborate gold laced, inconvenient

and oppressive uniforms of their regiment, and were burdened with the usual heavy accoutrements.

There were no troops from New York. It is not unlikely that individual patriots from that State, residing in the vicinity, may have attached themselves to Stark's force, but if so their number must have been so small that they passed unnoticed. Certainly, there was not a single organized unit from New York. Had there been, Stark, who was the most punctilious of men, would have made some mention of it. That he does not, and from the further facts that no mention is made of New Yorkers by any of the participants in the battle in their accounts of it, and that no muster roll of as much as a single company of New Yorkers taking part in the battle has ever been found, we must conclude that New York's claim to share the glory of the battle rests on the accidental fact that, in order to keep Burgoyne's invaders from reaching Bennington, Stark chose to meet them on New York soil. Its only other association with it was to furnish many of the Tories who fought on the British side, including the intrepid commander who led them, Colonel Pfister.

## CHAPTER VI

### BENNINGTON CARES FOR THE VICTIMS

After the battle was over the people of Bennington had to bear a heavy burden of responsibility. To them fell the onerous task of guarding the prisoners of war and caring for the wounded. For many long weeks thereafter this task was destined to occupy their attention and to strain their energies and resources to the uttermost. The manner in which they acquitted themselves merits a brief record here.

As we have noted in relating the account of the battle, as soon as the first engagement was over and Baume's soldiers—all except the few who escaped—had been disarmed, arrangements were made to convey them to Bennington without a moment's delay. Baume and Pfister were taken to a house in Shaftsbury, opposite where the old paper mill stands. Apparently to ease him from the jolting of the wagon over the rough road, Col. Pfister was lifted out and borne the rest of the way on the back of one of the soldiers, Jonathan Armstrong of Shaftsbury. Both the Brunswick commander and the Tory leader were tenderly cared for, but both died within twenty-four hours. Dr. Oliver Partridge, of Stockbridge, who had come too late to fight and remained to heal, could do

nothing for them. Captain Samuel Robinson, who was on guard over the house in which they were, sat with Baume and watched his life ebb away. He afterwards said that "a more intelligent and brave officer he had never seen than this unfortunate lieutenant."

Most of the wounded were taken to Bennington village in ox-carts and wagons, the worst cases being placed upon beds and bedding sent from Bennington homes for the purpose. Some died on the way. Few were the homes in the village—the part of Bennington now known as Old Bennington—which did not send beds or bed linen for the comfort of the wounded, whether these were friends or foes. No distinction was made between friends and enemies, or between British and Brunswick soldiers and Tories, in caring for the wounded. It was not for naught that they were a Christian people and their social and civil life to such a large extent centered in the village house of worship, the Meeting House.

But, in dealing with the unwounded prisoners, the conquerors drew a sharp distinction between the Tories and the others. The British, Canadian and German soldiers were marched, under guard, without being bound or subject to any necessary indignity. The Tories, however, were bound. Their hands were tied and they were bound two by two. The women of the village had taken down many of their bedsteads to furnish the rope required for this purpose. Headed by a negro, they were marched into Bennington. It was a special indignity which marked the hatred and contempt of the patriots

for the Tories. And that distinction persisted to the end, as was perhaps only natural.

That same evening, even while the second engagement was being fought, the tragic procession began to wend its way through the village. There were four homes in which bereaved wives and children were waiting to receive the bodies of their loved ones: John Fay, son of Landlord Stephen Fay, Henry Walbridge, brother of Col. Ebenezer Walbridge, Daniel Warner, first cousin of Seth Warner, and Nathan Clark, son of Captain Nathan Clark, had been killed in battle, each leaving a widow and children. When they told Stephen Fay that misfortune had befallen one of his sons in the battle—there were five of them asked, “What, has he misbehaved? Did he desert his post or run?” On being told that none of these things had happened, but that his son John had been killed, the stout hearted patriot rejoined: “Then I am satisfied: Bring him in and lay him before me, that at leisure I may behold and survey the darling of my soul. I thank God I had a son who was willing to give his life for his country.” So they took the body into the tavern, besmeared with blood and dirt. The old gentleman washed the body with his own hands, and was never heard to mourn his loss. In addition to the homes that were saddened by bereavement, there were a number of others into which the men who had gone forth in pride and fullness of strength were brought suffering and wounded.

The only place in which the prisoners could be confined was the village Meeting House. This had been built

in 1764,\* and was a plain building of unpainted wood, measuring fifty feet by forty. Into this the prisoners were packed like sardines, and it became as bad as the Black Hole of Calcutta. It was feared that the building would collapse. Some of the prisoners had to be taken out and report says that a few escaped. Captain Dewey's large barn was pressed into service, and the prisoners divided between the two buildings. Even then there was an overflow into the school house. Of course, only the un-wounded prisoners were dealt with in this way; for the wounded other provisions had to be made.

The prisoners had to be guarded and they had to be fed and for these and other reasons they were a burden. This was especially true of the German, British and Canadian soldiers, the "Regulars" as they were called in contradistinction to the Tories. The desire was to get rid of these as quickly as possible. On August 18 General John Fellows, of the Continental Army, and a resident of Sheffield, Massachusetts, arrived in town and took charge of these "Regulars." It was decided to take them as speedily as possible to Boston. It would appear that he delayed his departure for some considerable time, possibly awaiting the orders of the General Council of Massachusetts, as indicated by the letter of General Lincoln to the latter body, written from Bennington on August 18. This would appear to be the explanation of

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\*This date is approximate. The precise date of its erection is not known. A movement to raise funds was started in 1763. The Meeting House is known to have been in use at the end of 1764. The date usually given, 1763, is too early.

the fact that it was the end of August before the transfer of the prisoners was actually made. On August 25 the Council of Safety ordered Captain John Fassett to "take a potash kettle, for the Hessian troops to cook in." He was ordered to give his receipt for the "kettle" and "bring the same to the meeting-house in this place." This order, signed by Ira Allen, shows that the German prisoners had not yet left and were still being confined in the Meeting House.

The Meeting House was so crowded that the health of the men suffered. They were cared for as well as the resources of the community and the circumstances permitted, but that was far from well. There was a lack of proper provision for most elementary needs. After a time General Fellows marched off with most of the "Regulars" who were able to leave. The destination of the prisoners was Boston and General Fellows was to convey them as far as Worcester, where they would be taken in charge by Paul Revere. For some reason or other not disclosed, some of the prisoners were left at various places on the way, towns in Berkshire and Hampshire counties. It may have been because they were sick and unable to keep up with the others. The fact itself is well established. The General Court of Massachusetts ordered these prisoners to be committed to the care of the town committees which were vested with the power to hire them out to labor on such terms as might seem proper to the committees. This contributed materially to the relief of the situation created by the prevailing shortage of labor. The prisoners were welcome by

reason of that fact, and some of them became permanent settlers.\*

The Tory prisoners were held in Bennington for many months, some for considerably over a year. They were lodged in the Meeting House and in Dewey's barn. While additions were made to their ranks from time to time as a result of the arrest of other Tories, their living conditions were greatly improved after the "Regulars" had gone. There are many references in the records of the Council of Safety to these Tory prisoners, and it is easy to see that their lot was not an enviable one. They were regarded with a measure of contempt and of hatred which had not been manifested toward the other prisoners of war. In the eyes of the patriots at least, whereas the British and German soldiers were brave men, loyal to their own countries and governments, and therefore worthy of honor and respect, the Tories were traitors and therefore merited only execration. Captain Samuel Robinson was appointed overseer in charge of Tory prisoners. There were many attempts to escape, and in some instances the attempts were successful. But when those who escaped were recaptured—as often happened—their plight was all the worse. It was the practice to place such prisoners in irons and send them on to Albany to be dealt with there.

There is a rather interesting entry concerning the use to which Tory prisoners could be put. On January 12, 1778, the Council of Safety had before it the request of

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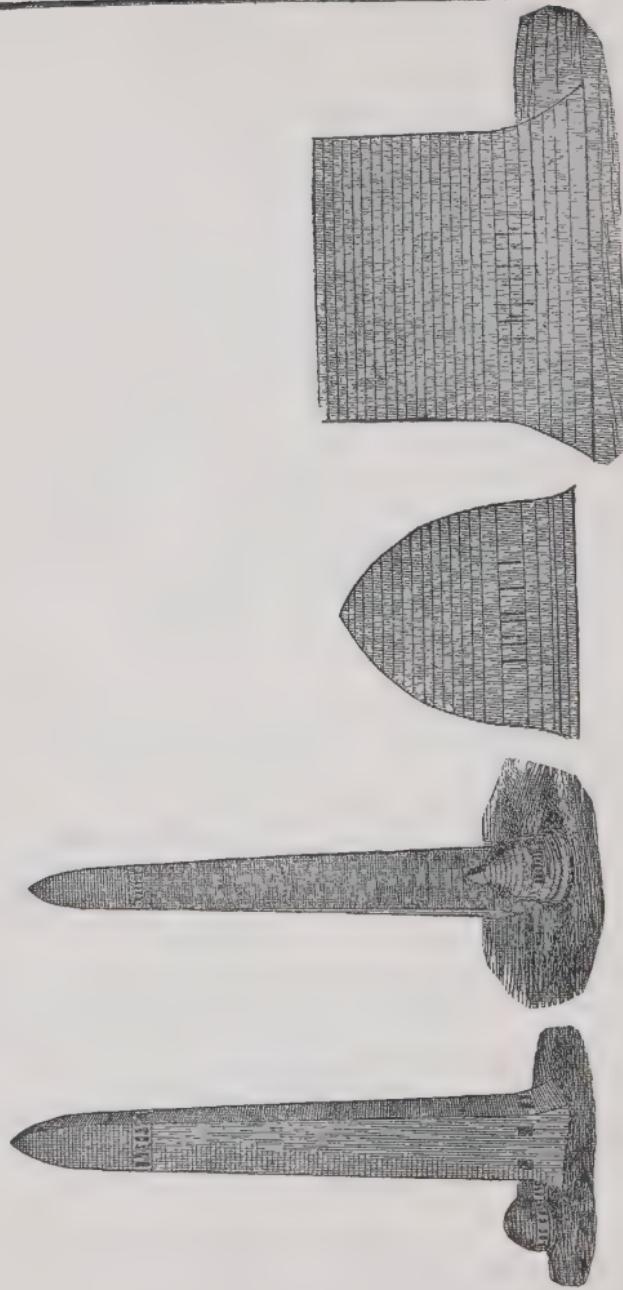
\*Smith, *History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts*, Vol. I, pp. 301-302

General John Stark that ten effective men be "immediately employed in beating and treading the snow, in the road leading from this place through the pass of the green mountains, to Col. William Williams, in Draper, alias Wilmington, within this State." The Council voted to grant the request "and order that Capt. Samuel Robinson, overseer of the tories, provide such number, properly officered and equipt, with provisions and other requisite necessaries." Then there is the order to Captain Robinson directing him to take ten of the Tory prisoners, under proper officers, and march them, in two distinct files, to Wilmington and back, setting forth that they "are to march and tread the snow in said road, a suitable width for a sleigh or sleighs, with a span of horses on each sleigh" and then to "return, marching in the same manner, to this place."

Caring for the Tory prisoners was a great burden to the Vermont authorities. This is evident from the many entries concerning them in the *Journal of the Council of Safety*. There were the many requests for special privileges such as to visit their homes to see sick members of their families, and the like. Sometimes a Tory prisoner had powerful friends on the patriot side to plead his cause. Some were released upon taking the oath of allegiance. Others were paroled upon the strict understanding that they would not leave the limits of their own farms until after the cessation of the war. In some cases it would appear that satisfactory sureties were required. A few Tory prisoners were banished from the town and State under penalty of death should they return. It is

*See Page 106*

RINN'S OBELISK AND CIRCULAR MUSEUM



said that some were sentenced to hard labor in the mines at Simsbury, Connecticut.

For the wounded prisoners, as well as for the wounded patriots, special provisions had to be made. There were more than 40 of Stark's men who were wounded, some of them desperately. The number of severely wounded Brunswickers was well over one hundred, and in addition to these there were a considerable number of wounded British, Canadians and Tories—certainly well in excess of two hundred men. Even today, if two hundred severely wounded men should be brought into an ordinary village of fifteen hundred inhabitants, it would be found extremely difficult to make even the simplest provision for them. In the conditions prevailing in Bennington in 1777 the task was naturally far more difficult.

There was no building in the town large enough to be used as a hospital. The Meeting House, which was the largest building, was crowded with prisoners and would have been altogether inadequate. The tavern of Landlord Fay was a small place at that time and crowded. To scatter so many patients among the private homes would have been out of the question in any case, because it was imperative that the time and strength of the few doctors and surgeons available be conserved. An emergency hospital was set up. Tradition says that it was south of Fay's tavern. It probably consisted of tents from the stores of the Continental Army. Very shortly—not more than a few days we may be sure—a more satisfactory arrangement was undertaken. Whether it was a new building of rough wood hastily thrown up,

or a hasty adaptation of some existing building or buildings, such as sheds or barns, is not known. But it is known that for the care of the wounded a large hospital was set up and that it was under the control of the medical and surgical service of the Continental Army.

This hospital, probably the first regular military hospital in Vermont, was maintained long after the last of the wounded victims of the Battle of Bennington had been discharged. It stood on the land situated in the angle formed by what are now Monument Avenue and West Main Street, Old Bennington, immediately opposite the modest marker that marks the site of the house once occupied by Ethan Allen.\* Until the end of the war Bennington was an important center. Troops were always passing through and during the epidemic of dysentery which ravaged this section of the country in the latter part of 1777 and the early part of the following year a great many sick soldiers were brought here.

But, to return to the case of the wounded victims of the memorable battle; not only was there no proper place for handling a large number of wounded men, but there was equally a dearth of everything else. We may be sure that the surgeons of Baume's force, who were among the prisoners taken, would do all in their power to alleviate the sufferings of their compatriots, and since their equipment had been taken as well as themselves they

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\*Ethan Allen was a prisoner in the hands of the British at the time of the Battle of Bennington. He returned to Bennington, May 31, 1778.

must have had the instruments and drugs needed. There was a surgeon with Stark's brigade and a case of "amputating instruments." Jonas Fay, who had acted as surgeon at Ticonderoga in 1775, was there and doubtless was pressed into service. Doctor Oliver Partridge from Stockbridge was on hand to help and there were probably others whose names are not known to the present writer. It would appear from the *Journal* of the Council of Safety that other surgeons had rushed here from Saratoga.

That the wounded were given the best care that was possible we may be certain. But that best was undeniably very poor. General Burgoyne sent his Surgeon General, Dr. Wood, to General Gates with a letter to complain of the treatment of the wounded Brunswickers. He was permitted to visit Bennington under a flag of truce and to inspect the hospital and assure himself and his chief that the wounded men were being cared for as well as the circumstances and the resources of the country would permit.

Fifty years ago there was a good deal of interest in the proposal to mark the site of the military hospital, but the matter was dropped. Perhaps with the revival of interest in such matters it may yet be done.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW THE MONUMENT WAS BUILT

The foregoing chapters sufficiently explain why the people of Bennington felt that the famous battle was in a special sense their affair, and why there arose among them, quite early in the nineteenth century, a widespread feeling that it should be commemorated by a worthy monument. As the ranks of the veterans were thinned by the remorseless passing of the years, so that each successive sixteenth of August saw fewer of the veterans in attendance at the celebration, the desire for a monument gained strength. The event itself had taken on something of the glamour and grandeur that only time can give. The old veterans of the memorable battle of 1777 were already regarded as men whose heroic deeds marked them as superior to ordinary mortals. The apotheosis of these simple Vermont yeomen had begun, and the demand for a monument was inevitable.

Bennington people had not named the battle. As we have seen, the name first used by John Hancock suggested itself, and gained universal currency, not as the result of any effort by the Bennington people, motivated by local pride or selfish interest, but by reason of its own inherent fitness. Bennington people did not want to take from their neighbors over the New York line anything of

glory or of credit that belonged to them, or that they had ever claimed. It is a mistake to suppose that the people of Bennington or of Vermont as a whole had any unfriendly feeling toward the people of the neighboring State of New York. Nothing could be farther from the truth than that. Even during the long years of struggle over the land grants the hostility of the Vermonters was directed against only the ruling bureaucracy of that State. There was friendship between the peoples. Even when there was a price set upon his head, Ethan Allen could move among the people of Albany as freely as in the "Grants." In calling the engagements of August 16, 1777, the Battle of Bennington, the Vermonters were not actuated by any feeling against their neighbors over the border. Nobody sought to hide, much less to deny, the fact that the actual fighting took place around Walloomsac and Sancoick. That fact the Bennington people constantly proclaimed and they would doubtless have been willing to have it engraved upon the monument. What they felt was that the memorable battle was associated with the history of Bennington in such an intimate way, and so inseparably intertwined in that history, that it was peculiarly their duty to bring about the erection of the monument. It was not so much a thing they wanted to do—though it was that—as a thing they felt they ought to do. And there was only one thought in their minds as to the site; it ought to be as nearly as possible upon the spot where stood the principal storehouse containing the stores which Burgoyne coveted and hoped to secure through Baume's expedition.

Discussion of the need of a monument to the Battle of Bennington began as early as 1825, as men began to think of the approach of the fiftieth anniversary, but nothing definite developed. It would seem that any monument which was sufficiently impressive according to their quite modest tastes would have cost much more than could have been raised for the purpose. About 1850, in view of the approach of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the battle, interest in the subject was revived, but 1852 passed without the erection of any sort of monument. In that year, however, it was decided to begin an organized movement looking to the erection of a fitting monument. The last of the Bennington men who had participated in the battle, Samuel Safford, had died the year before, and his death had the effect of increasing the interest in the project. Accordingly we find that at the session of 1853 the Legislature of Vermont passed an act incorporating the Bennington Battle Monument Association.

Looking over the list of the incorporators it is interesting to note some of the names. At the head is that of Governor John S. Robinson, then in office, whose chief distinction is that he was the only Democrat ever elected to that office. There is A. P. Lyman, a well-known lawyer in his day, who is now remembered chiefly by reason of his connection with the famous United States pottery. There is Nathan B. Haswell, son of Anthony Haswell and Grand Master of the Masons during the anti-masonic agitation. Among other notable Bennington names are those of Benjamin F. Fay, Pierpont Isham, Elijah Dewey Hubbell, Samuel Hinman Brown and Heman Swift—

all names that hold honorable place in Bennington history. Then there are the names of other great Vermonters like Erastus Fairbanks, Henry Stevens, E. P. Walton and Paul Dillingham. It is quite clear from the list of incorporators that the finest elements of the citizenry of the State were interested in the erection of a worthy memorial to the Battle of Bennington.

The act of incorporation provided that as soon as the Association should raise not less than seven thousand dollars, actual cash, an additional three thousand dollars should be contributed by the State of Vermont. This feature of the bill when it was presented in the Legislature roused a good deal of opposition, but it was carried nevertheless. On January 18, 1854, a meeting of the incorporators and others was held at Rutland, when it was decided that membership in the Association should be open to all who would subscribe ten dollars. It was hoped that a large membership would be obtained with relative ease and that the seven thousand dollars necessary to secure the State appropriation would be raised without much difficulty. A State-wide canvass was planned and permanent organization effected. Governor John S. Robinson was made President of the Association, Samuel Hinman Brown was Treasurer and Alfred Robinson Corresponding Secretary. Among the members of the Executive Committee were Dr. William Bigelow, Luman Norton, the famous potter, A. B. Gardner, Benjamin R. Sears and Perez Harwood, Jr.

It must be confessed that the high hopes entertained by the promoters of this movement proved to be illusory.

Notwithstanding the fact that the celebration of the sixteenth of August that year—the seventy-seventh anniversary of the Battle of Bennington—excelled in many ways all previous celebrations, the amount of money actually raised was small. One does not have to be very cynical to feel that, however great their interest and sincere their patriotism, the people were notably slow to express it in cash contributions! That fact is that there was not a great deal of interest in the project outside of Bennington. That was made impressively plain at the Rutland meeting in January, 1854. Money was scarce enough in Bennington in those days, and there were doubtless many who could not make the required subscription whose interest was both genuine and deep. It appears that of the amount subscribed the greater part consisted of pledges, to be paid when called for. These were not called for and the cash paid in was returned to the subscribers. Thoroughly discouraged, the promoters abandoned their efforts and the Association was disbanded.

In 1873-74 the consciousness that they were approaching the one-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Bennington stirred some of the leaders of Bennington, including a number of those who had joined in the abortive efforts to raise funds for a monument in 1854, with the hope that at least there might be a centennial celebration of the cherished anniversary upon a scale of grandeur far greater than anything that had ever been attempted in the State. Apparently, they had no thought at this time of reviving the monument project. It is significant that in all the discussions of the approaching centennial

anniversary which the present writer has reviewed, there was no expression of any intention to attempt the realization of the long cherished idea of a monument. On the other hand, and particularly in view of the attitude of the people of the State generally toward the monument idea in 1854, it is equally significant that twenty years later the demand for a great celebration of the centennial anniversary of the Battle of Bennington was general throughout the State. It is not an exaggeration to say that the interest in Bennington was not greater than in the State as a whole. It would appear from the records that Vermonters in general had come to regard the battle with greater interest and a more just appreciation than they had done in 1854.

It was felt that the centennial anniversary was of national importance and not a matter which was of interest only to Bennington. Even before any preparations for the celebration had been commenced by the Bennington people, the whole State seemed to have made up its mind that there would be a celebration upon a big scale. Thus we find various State organizations, without any organized propaganda, deciding in 1875 to hold their conventions and meetings for 1877 at Bennington during the week of the sixteenth of August. It was a spontaneous movement.

At the end of October, 1875, the Bennington Historical Society was formed. Its President was Hon. Hiland Hall, a former Governor of the State and its most accomplished and authoritative historian. The organization of this society was the first definite step toward the

centennial celebration. For some time previously Mr. J. Halsey Cushman, editor of the *Bennington Banner*, and Mr. Asaph P. Childs, editor of the *Vermont Gazette*, published in Bennington, had been urging in their respective papers that it was time to begin the work of arranging for the adequate celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the battle, in 1777. The meeting of citizens that was convened at the end of October was for the purpose of considering the suggestion "that a Town Historical Society be formed in this town to aid in preparing for the centennial anniversary of the Battle of Bennington." Neither from the call for the meeting nor the antecedent discussion in the local press does it appear that the revival of the monument project was contemplated.

At the meeting, however, the matter was brought forward by the late Olin Scott, one of Bennington's most honored citizens. In a characteristically vigorous speech he deplored the fact that no thought had been given to the subject of a monument by those responsible for the meeting, who had directed all their attention to the centennial celebration. While he was as much interested in the latter as anybody, he insisted that this was the time to revive the plan for a monument and carry it into execution. To the proposition before the meeting, that the name of the organization be the Bennington Historical Society, he offered an amendment to the effect that it be Bennington Historical and Monumental Society, and that among its declared objects and purposes the erection of a monument in commemoration of the Battle of Bennington

should be included and given equal importance with the proposed centennial celebration. Although the amendment was defeated, it was simply the name that was objected to; the inclusion of the monument among the objects of the society was approved. Colonel Scott had won his main point.

At the session of the Vermont Legislature in 1876, an act was passed incorporating the Bennington Battle Monument Association. This was a separate and distinct body, having for its object the "erecting and maintaining (of) a suitable monument commemorative of the achievements of General John Stark and the patriot soldiers of Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, at the decisive Battle of Bennington fought on the 16th of August 1777." This incorporated association was brought into existence through the decision and efforts of the Bennington Historical Society, of which it was an auxiliary and instrument. The act of incorporation provided that the State should contribute the sum of \$15,000 toward the cost of the monument "upon receiving proof that said Association has raised, and is in actual possession of available funds, to the amount of \$5000." The act also gave the Association the right to take steps to arrange at Bennington, during the week of the 16th of August, 1877, "an appropriate Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Bennington, and also the recognition of the year 1877 as the 100th year of the existence of this State as an Independent State." To enable the Association to carry out this second purpose it was provided that the State should furnish the sum of \$2000 "provided the

Association shall raise the sum of \$2000 for this purpose."

Acting under the provisions of this act relating to the celebration, the Association created a Centennial Commission, with the Hon. Edward J. Phelps as its president. It was this Centennial Commission which arranged and carried through with brilliant success the elaborate program of August 15 and 16, 1877, when President Rutherford B. Hayes attended. Beyond this reference to it we have in this work, no further concern with that great event. The celebration cost about \$14,000.

Little could be done by the Bennington Battle Monument Association toward the fulfillment of its task of securing funds for the erection of a monument during 1876-77. To raise funds for the celebration, the plans for which kept growing ever more extensive and ambitious, it was necessary to withhold any effort to raise funds for the monument. Moreover, so gigantic had the celebration become that to carry it through successfully required the united energies of all, including those whose special interest was the monument. Until 1878, therefore, the monument enterprise was in eclipse. It is interesting to know that the first actual cash contribution received toward the cost of building the monument was given by an old lady nearly ninety years old, Mrs. Jethro Gerry, more familiarly known as "Aunt Omindia Gerry." This old lady gave one hundred dollars in cash to the monument fund, greatly to the astonishment of everybody who knew it. Her reputation for piggardliness and frugality carried far beyond the point of virtue was

such that most people found it difficult to believe that she had given anything, much less a hundred dollars, which was for her a considerable sum. Mrs. Gerry's grandfather had fought in the Battle of Bennington, and she was for long the owner of one of the British red coats which had belonged to one of the victims of the battle.

At the time of the celebration of 1877, therefore, practically nothing definite had been done toward realizing the long cherished ambition of Bennington to have a worthy monument of the Battle of Bennington. No design had at that time been selected, or even seriously considered—officially. There was, however, a fairly general sense that a design which had been prepared by Truman D. Bartlett, the well known Vermont sculptor, and J. Philip Rinn, a noted Boston architect, acting in collaboration, would be adopted. In fact, the design was widely published throughout the country as the one which was to be used. It was so published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, September 1, 1877, and in many other publications. It was also extensively used by the Association in its campaign for funds. It is therefore not to be wondered at that it came to be regarded as the officially chosen design for the monument. In his book, *The Second Battle of Bennington*, a history of the centennial celebration, which was at least semi-official, Charles S. Forbes used a picture of this design as frontispiece with the caption "Proposed Granite Monument." It is quite clear that at the outset this design, while never officially passed upon and accepted, was re-

garded by the promoters as the one they expected to use. The design is therefore of some historic interest. In many ways it reminds one of the Vendome column. A classically proportioned column, to be built of native granite, one hundred feet in height, is surmounted by a figure representing a Green Mountain Boy attacking a foe and having a gallery or lookout at the base of the figure. This gallery is made accessible by means of a circular stairway. At the base of the column bronze figures set at the four corners complete the design.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Association held at Burlington, May 26, 1878, a Committee on Design was elected consisting of Hon. E. J. Phelps and Governor Prescott, of New Hampshire. At a subsequent meeting of the Board, August 15, 1878, the committee was enlarged by adding to it Governor Rice, of Massachusetts, Hon. A. B. Gardner and Hon. Trenor W. Park, of Bennington. For several years this Committee on Design considered various designs that had been submitted and interviewed artists and sculptors from time to time. It must be confessed that their work was done rather intermittently and perfunctorily up to the end of 1883. It is a matter of common knowledge, though not of record, that Mr. Phelps was almost the only member of the committee to take his duties seriously during those first years. Getting anything like the sum of money that it was proposed to raise, \$75,000, was proving to be a hard job and until the money was in sight the Committee on Design was in no hurry.

At the beginning of 1883, the committee began to

take its duties more seriously than it had done. Many thousands of dollars had been raised, or pledged, and the active members of the Association urged that if a design were chosen it would be much easier to raise the balance needed and to kindle enthusiasm generally. At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Association held in New York City, January 31, 1883, Governor Bell of New Hampshire presiding, General John G. McCullough, of North Bennington, was added to the Committee on Design, Messrs. Park and Gardner having died in the meantime. During the whole of that year and the year following the committee considered such designs as were submitted. Many of the best known sculptors and architects in the country sent designs, sketches of designs, or suggestions which they proposed to work out if commissioned to do so. One of the most interesting of these designs was that submitted by J. S. Hartley, a distinguished sculptor and native of Vermont, in collaboration with D. W. Millard, a well-known architect. This design was interesting principally because it contemplated the use of the brass cannon which were taken from the enemy on August 16, 1777. The original sketch, drawn by Mr. Hartley and afterward, at the request of the Committee on Design, worked up by the designers, is here reproduced.

On December 2, 1884, the Board of Directors of the Association held a meeting in New York City, at the offices of the Panama Railroad Company, Ex-Governor Prescott of New Hampshire presiding. At this meeting the Committee on Design presented its report through

**Hon. E. J. Phelps.** The report discussed the subject of appropriate monuments at great length and recommended the immediate adoption of a design which had been made and submitted by Prof. Weir, of Yale University. The Committee on Design set forth at considerable length the theory of art upon which its choice of a design was based. It held that there were, broadly speaking, two classes of monuments, which they designated the architectural and the sculptural. The former depended for their effect upon imposing height and mass. They did not, in their organic conception at least, tell any particular story; that is to say, they presented no picture which would be self-explanatory. The sculptural type, on the other hand, in organic conception presented a picture intimately and definitely related to the event commemorated. Thus, a shaft or column depending upon size for its impressiveness, however attractive it might be, would not, of and by itself, tell anything concerning a particular event. To cite a single example, the Washington monument and the Bunker Hill monument could be transposed, each taking the place of the other, without any incongruousness. On the other hand, a sculptural monument, essentially pictorial, picturing a particular battle, could no more be used to commemorate another battle without incongruous result than a headstone with an epitaph for one person could be used over the grave of another without incongruity. The report described the Weir design as follows:

"The structure is designed to stand about twenty feet square on the ground, and about fifty feet in clear height,

and to be on a mound ten feet high, making a total height of about sixty feet. The mass of the base is to be composed of rough blocks of New England granite. From these rises a shaft of unhewn granite, irregular in form, suggestive of the character of the age and of the country, converging toward the top. This is surmounted by a figure in bronze, of striking attitude, fifteen feet high, which may be either a portrait statue of Gen. Stark, or a representative ideal figure typifying the revolutionary leader. On the corners of the base at the foot of the shaft are designed to stand four bronze statues eight feet high, representative of those who took part in the fight and its incidents. These need not be portraits of individuals, but types of the time and the event. The farmer and the artisan turning from their avocations to take up arms to resist invasion. The woman of the time, not less memorable than the man, sheltering her child from the coming storm. The minister of religion, whose words animated his flock, and invoked upon them the Divine benediction. These sculptures, if competently designed and executed, will express most forcibly the event which is to be signalized, and, what is much more, the national spirit of which that event was the outcome."

It is no part of our present purpose to discuss the artistic theories held and advanced by the Committee on Design. The report contained much that was wise and sound and much else that was pure nonsense. Our concern is with the design that was adopted by the committee. It was from every point of view about as bad as it

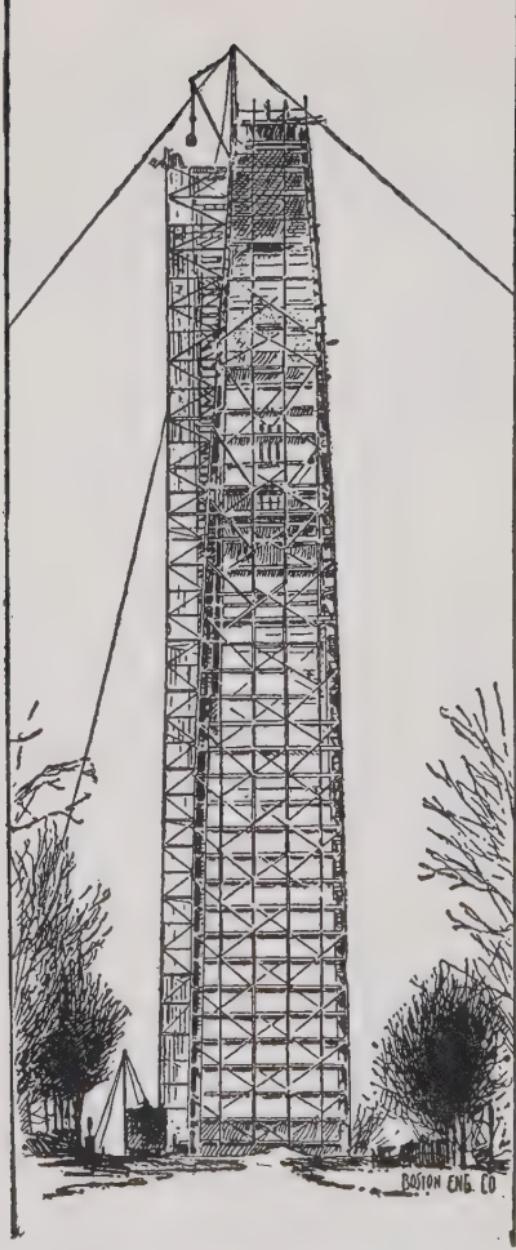
could be. *The American Magazine of Art* said of it:—  
“\* \* \* with all respect for Prof. Weir and the best of good-will towards him, we can only reaffirm that in our opinion his project was utterly bad.” Hiland Hall declared it to be “a little monument to a great event.” Eminent and highly respected as the members of the Committee on Design were, their choice of a design was received in Bennington with great sorrow and dissatisfaction. It soon became evident that it would require great tact and forbearance to avoid having another “battle of Bennington” over the design for the commemoration of the first battle.

A group of prominent members of the Bennington Historical Society and of the Battle Monument Association, led by Hiland Hall and Charles M. Bliss, vigorously assailed the Weir design and demanded that the whole matter be referred, for final decision, to the Historical Society, which they held to be superior in authority and influence to the Association. These gentlemen strongly favored a design which had been produced by Mr. J. Philip Rinn, principal designer of the design of 1877, already described. This new design, locally known as “the big tower,” was extremely popular. The earlier design had provided for a column one hundred feet in height, and it was quite evident that its lesser height was one of the greatest objections urged against the Weir design. Mr. Rinn’s second design, “the big tower,” made a daring appeal to the imagination. It provided for a structure three hundred feet in height.

It is not necessary in this sketch to enter into a detailed

account of the controversy over the designs. There was a good deal of bitterness and angry feeling, the effects of which were felt during many years thereafter. In April 1885, at a special meeting of the Bennington Historical Society, a committee of forty members, headed by Ex-Governor Hiland Hall, President of the society, was chosen to bring forward a design of the general character of that presented by Mr. Rinn, a tall monument, architectural rather than sculptural. On July 8 and 9, 1885, this committee recommended to the Historical Society for presentation to the Battle Monument Association, Mr. Rinn's design for a monument 300 feet high. This design was presented to the meeting of the Association August 11, 1885. At that meeting General John G. McCullough, on behalf of the Board of Directors, in deference to the storm of criticism and opposition it had evoked, formally withdrew the Weir design from further consideration.

It was then resolved, on the motion of the Hon. E. P. Walton seconded by the Hon. W. M. Evarts, of New York, "that the design for a structure three hundred feet high recommended by the advisory committee of the Historical Society, to this Association, be adopted subject to such modification as the committee of the Association now to be appointed shall hereafter make." As a matter of fact, however, the design thus approved was soon given up. The "big tower" was abandoned. In this case "modification" meant abandonment and the substitution of something entirely different. As will be seen from our illustration, the "big tower" design was a bold one. It had the great merit of providing a museum



THE MONUMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION—RAISING THE CAP STONE  
*See Page 113*

building at the base of the monument, an idea which strongly commended itself to the leaders of the monument project. They wanted in connection with the monument a place for the exhibition of relics of the Battle of Bennington, and of early Bennington life, then far more numerous than today. It was with the greatest reluctance that the museum feature was later abandoned.

The "big tower" was abandoned largely because of the criticisms of Olin L. Warner, the sculptor, a descendant of Samuel Warner, brother of the famous Colonel Seth Warner, Truman D. Bartlett and his son, Paul W. Bartlett, native Vermonters and sculptors of distinction, and other sculptors of note. These men—as well as such artists as William W. Story, Wyatt Eaton and others—heartily favored the general idea expressed in the Rinn design. They believed that such a group of statuary as Professor Weir's design contemplated would be hopelessly dwarfed by the surrounding hills and that only such a massive and towering structure as the Rinn design projected would be appropriate against such a background. Both Warner and the elder Bartlett contended, however, that the "big tower" sinned against one of the essential canons of art in that when seen silhouetted against the sky it would not present an invariable and uniform appearance. It would present a different profile from various points of view. This, Warner contended in a letter, would deprive the monument of the impressive familiarity as a feature of the landscape which it ought to possess and without which it must be a failure. Its effect would be to make the monument appear "tricky"

and its impressions upon the mind and memory fickle and changing. To prove his point, Warner insisted that sketches be drawn to show the appearance of the tower from various points of approach and vision. He also made a clay model several feet high and set it up out doors to emphasize his contention. Our illustration of the design from four points of view affords an interesting demonstration of Warner's criticism.

Keeping to the idea of an architectural structure of great height, Rinn then produced a new design, the prototype of the design of the monument as we now know it. It was thus described: "A square tapering shaft, three hundred feet high or thereabouts, adjacent to which stands a small circular building with a low dome roof, intended for a museum, and the two are united by an arch." The tall shaft was to be modelled upon the general shape of the Egyptian obelisk, but differing in its swelling sides and its slightly but definitely convexed top. Near the base, a few feet from the ground, it was to be enriched by a series of *bas relief* tablets. The little circular museum building was as reminiscent of India as the shaft was of Egypt. It resembled an Indian *tope* as closely as the shaft resembled an Egyptian obelisk. There was thus an incongruous association of two styles of architecture, two unrelated conceptions. The attempt to bring these into harmony by means of a connecting arch, otherwise of no practical value, added to the incongruity of the effect rather than otherwise.

It will be easily recognized from the illustrations of this design that it contained the main elements of success.

The museum feature was reluctantly given up, and it was at once seen that the tall shaft standing by itself was tremendously more impressive. It was felt that the museum could be built independently later on. It is exceedingly doubtful if the leaders of the project would have consented to this arrangement if they had dreamed that it would take forty years more to get the museum, during which time the greater part of the relics they desired to preserve and exhibit would be scattered far and wide and irretrievably lost to the town. By repeated experiments Rinn, aided by the advice and suggestions of many of the foremost artists in the country, evolved the design of the monument as we know it.

That the Bennington monument ranks high among the architectural monuments of the world is universally admitted by critics of the highest competence. Finely proportioned, imposing by its great height, nobly impressive by reason of its rugged, simple dignity, it is a monument worthy the event it commemorates and fully justifying the long years of labor and sacrifice which led to its consummation. Silhouetted against the evening sky it forms a picture of supreme beauty. The present writer never looks upon that picture without feeling a sense of profound gratitude to those men who, without being professional artists or art critics, had the true artistic feeling and insight which led them to reject the Weir design, to insist that any such group of statuary must be trivial and insignificant in such a setting, and to contend successfully for a monument so completely in harmony with its surroundings and with the event it commemorates.

On August 6, 1886, at a special meeting of the Battle Monument Association presided over by Ex-Governor Horace Fairbanks, a resolution was adopted providing that "the monument be located in the centre of the highway on the crest of the hill as nearly opposite the Old Continental Store House\*" as practicable." In November of that same year the General Assembly of the State of Vermont created a commission consisting of the President of the Bennington Battle Monument Association, John L. Barstow, Levi K. Fuller, Aldace F. Walker and L. H. Thompson to determine what lands and buildings adjoining the site must be secured to insure to the monument freedom from objectionable surroundings. Messrs. Barstow, Fuller, Walker, Thompson and Milo C. Huling were, by the same act, named as commissioners to negotiate for the purchase of the property if possible, and to take steps for its condemnation if necessary. Mr. Walker finding it necessary to resign, owing to his appointment to an important office under the Federal Government, the Governor appointed the Hon. J. K. Batchelder to fill his place. Section 6 of the same act appropriated the sum of \$10,000 for the purchase of the site, subject to the provisions that the monument must be commenced within six months from the date of the purchase of the site, and be completed within five years thereafter.

On April 26, 1887, at a meeting of the Board of Direc-

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\*That is, the *site* of the Store House, as it had been located and marked by a simple stone, now replaced. »

tors of the Battle Monument Association, Major Alonzo B. Valentine, on behalf of the Building Committee, presented a form of contract for building the monument, with a bid for the work, submitted by William H. Ward, of Lowell, Mass. This contract was authorized by the Association and duly executed. On May 23, 1887, the Building Committee addressed a letter to the Governors of New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont in which they set forth that the Association was in possession of the following funds, appropriated and raised for the purpose of building the monument:

Appropriation by the Congress of the United States	\$40,000
Appropriation by the State of Vermont	15,000
Appropriation by the State of New Hampshire	5,000
Appropriation by the State of Massachusetts	10,000
Raised by the Bennington Battle Monument Association	10,000
	<hr/>
	\$80,000

The letter went on to say "The plans for the monument have been duly approved as follows: By the President of the United States, the Governor of the State of Vermont, the Governor of New Hampshire, the Governor of Massachusetts, and the Bennington Battle Monument Association. A contract has been duly entered into between this Association and W. H. Ward, of Lowell, Mass., to build and complete a monument, within three

years, for the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars; together with a good and sufficient bond, for the faithful performance of the same, a copy of which is herewith transmitted. Said monument to be erected within a period of three years, on land selected by this Association, which has been secured to the State of Vermont; together with all adjoining land within a reasonable distance, in order to preserve, forever, freedom from any objectionable surroundings." It should be added to this statement that in addition to raising the ten thousand dollars included in the statement, all the expenses of administration and carrying on the work of publicity for the project had been raised by the Historical Society and the Battle Monument Association.

Work was at once begun on the monument. The precise date of breaking the ground for the foundation was June 4, 1887, but the contractor had men working in the local quarries owned by Messrs. Lyman and Fillmore, some time before that. The corner stone was laid August 16, 1887. The event was the occasion of a memorable celebration. The Board of Directors of the Battle Monument Association, at its meeting in June, had invited the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Vermont to be present and to participate in the laying of the corner stone of the monument, and as a result of that invitation and its ready acceptance the stone-laying ceremonial was carried out by the Grand Lodge according to masonic rules and usages.

There was an imposing procession in which the Grand Lodge, escorted by the Grand Commandery of Knights

Templar, held an important and conspicuous place. There were other fraternal organizations, patriotic bodies, military organizations from Massachusetts, New York and Vermont, bands and various civic bodies. The President of the Association, Ex-Governor Prescott, of New Hampshire, presided and the orator of the day was the Hon. John W. Stewart, one of the two Congressmen from Vermont. Governor Sawyer of New Hampshire, Governor Ames of Massachusetts and Governor Ormsbee of Vermont were on the speakers' platform with U. S. Senator George W. Edmunds, one of Vermont's most famous sons, and Congressman W. W. Grout. In attendance also were many of the most eminent and distinguished citizens of the State, including the ex-governors, Horace Fairbanks, Samuel E. Pingree, John L. Barstow and Frederick Holbrook.

The corner stone was estimated to weigh about five tons. It was seven feet long, three feet wide and two feet eight inches thick. In conformity with an ancient practice, a receptacle was placed under the stone containing various documents and other memorabilia. According to the records of the Grand Secretary, these consisted of the following items:

The Holy Bible; Hall's *Early History of Vermont*; Jennings' *Memorials of a Century*; manuscript Historical Account Relating to the Battle Monument, by Rev. Isaac Jennings; copy of the contract for the erection of the monument; *Biographical Encyclopedia, 19th Century, Vermont*; Copies of the *Bennington Banner* containing picture and description of the monument and a record

history of the project; copies of the *Bennington Reformer*; other Vermont newspapers; Troy and New York City newspapers; printed copies of the various laws, State and National, relating to the monument; copy of the volume *Battle of Bennington and Vermont Centennial, 1877*; copy of Forbes' *Vermont's Centennial; History of Vermont Odd Fellowship*; Report of Masonic Grand Lodge, Vermont, 1887; official program of the stone-laying; program for the Masonic ceremonies connected with the stone-laying; Bennington Centennial Memorial Medal; Bank notes of the banks in Bennington; various copper coins; Brigade Order and Roster and regimental order from Adjutant General's office for muster of 1887.

The benediction was pronounced by the Rev. Isaac Jennings, the beloved pastor of the First Church, author of *Memorials of a Century*. Few men had labored with greater diligence than he to bring about the erection of the monument, and there were even fewer who had done so much to foster interest in the early history of Bennington. This was his last public appearance. He died August 25, 1887. That his last public act should have been to pronounce the benediction at the laying of the corner stone of the monument seems particularly fitting and is remembered with gratitude by many Bennington people.

On Monday, November 25, 1889, at sunrise, the firing of two guns announced to the people of Bennington and vicinity that the cap stone, completing the masonry of the monument, would be laid that afternoon. The date had been provisionally set and announced a week or two

before, by the superintendent of construction, Mr. Parsons, and the guns were fired, by arrangement, to let the people know that the event would take place as planned. Quite early in the forenoon, therefore, people began to wend their way towards the monument. They went on foot from the village and in carriages of every description from the outlying districts. Special cars were run over the spur railway line that was used for conveying materials to take representatives of the press, members of the Battle Monument Association and their ladies, and specially invited guests to witness the placing of the last stone in position. Arriving on the ground these specially favored guests of the superintendent, Mr. Parsons, were permitted to ride "up the improvised elevator outside the shaft to its top."

The cap stone, of the same Sandy Hill dolomite as the rest of the face of the structure, pyramidal in form, is three feet in height, its base being four feet, four inches square from which it tapers to eight inches square at the top, being so flattened in order to provide for the large star which crowns the structure. The cap stone was estimated to weigh two tons. To the cable by which the stone was raised to the top and then lowered into place there had been fastened a Masonic flag of blue silk, trimmed with silver embroidery, the gift of the superintendent of construction, Mr. Parsons, and a magnificent bouquet of flowers, the gift of L. M. Holton & Co. At 2:40 o'clock in the afternoon the gun was fired and the cap-stone began to ascend slowly. Half way to the top it was halted to enable the photographers to take pictures,

and this was repeated twice at later stages. The gun was fired at intervals of fifteen minutes and at three o'clock precisely the stone was deposited in its place.

As the stone was deposited in its place, there was a great outburst of cheering from the crowd below, which the *Rutland Herald* estimated at three thousand persons. It was not known that there was to be any ceremony on the little platform which had been erected at the top of the monument, level with the top of the capstone, and so the crowd quickly dispersed. But, in addition to the workmen engaged, there were nearly thirty men on the platform. They saw the cap stone lifted again to be properly embedded in cement, and some of them threw silver coins under it as it was finally lowered into position, guided by William Ward, contractor, Albert Parsons, superintendent, J. P. Rinn, architect, Major Valentine and Henry G. Root, of the Building Committee of the Association. Just as the stone was set and pronounced "well and truly laid" somebody started the doxology and the immortal hymn was sung by that little company amid the hurricane that blew around them three hundred feet above the ground. Then some one suggested that they ought to sing "America" and it was done with a will. Next cheers were given for "Our Country," for "Vermont, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, who built the monument," for "the Battle Monument Association," for "the building committee," for "the contractor," for "the superintendent," for "the architect," and for "the workmen."

Some one then called upon the Rev. M. L. Severance,

pastor of the First Church, to say a few words. He responded with a very brief address followed by a prayer, as follows:

*Gentlemen*:—The occasion is worthy of a lengthy and finished address; but the time of day and the circumstances under which we are placed forbid any extended remarks.

The work of our honored fathers, which this structure is erected to commemorate, is sufficiently recorded in history, and I leave it to history to acquaint you with the facts.

We are thankful today for the victory which our fathers achieved, and which has given rise to this commemorative shaft. We are thankful for the spirit of loyalty and patriotism which prompted its erection; and we are thankful for the careful and wise superintendence which has brought it thus far towards its completion.

I venture to say that *never*, since the world began, has there been built another *similar structure* in so brief a time, by so few men, without *one single accident* from foundation to topmost stone.

This monument, so symmetrical and grand, standing on its immovable foundation, must ever be an inspiration of character to all generations.

It is a worthy contribution of our State, and of the States that joined with us, to the cause of liberty and justice which our fathers so grandly espoused.

Here it stands, peerless amid these encircling mountains, fit emblem of justice and enduring strength for all mankind.

This graceful shaft in the years to come will be the glory of Vermont. It will signify to our sons, to our *Nation*, and to the *world*, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

But a little more than two years ago it was given to my revered predecessor, the Rev. Isaac Jennings, the last public act of his life, to pronounce the benediction at the laying of the corner stone of this monument.

Through the kindness of its superintendent, Mr. Albert Parsons, this honor is now accorded to me.

Let us look to God for His benediction:

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this day, and this rare occasion. We do humbly thank Thee for the victory and the achievement of liberty which this solid structure is intended to commemorate.

"We thank Thee for the spirit of freedom which animated our fathers and led them to throw off the yoke of oppression, and for the spirit of loyalty, which has led their sons to lift up their deeds to enduring remembrance.

"We thank Thee, O God, that this great work has been so well planned and so successfully brought on its way to completion; and now we pray Thee that *Thy benediction* may rest upon it.

"Here may it stand through all generations, an inspiration and power for good to every oppressed and struggling people.

"As our children and children's children come to look upon this shaft may the spirit of loyalty to our free institutions rekindle upon them, and the love of liberty take

possession of every heart, and unto Thee, O, God, shall be the praise and glory forever, and ever. Amen."

After Mr. Severance had concluded his prayer, one by one each of those present stepped from the platform on to the top of the cap stone. It was a trying ordeal for some of them to stand, unsupported, upon that small surface, eight inches square, 301 feet  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches above the ground. Other than the contractor and his staff, those who dared this feat were: J. P. Rinn, architect; Hon. H. G. Root, Major A. B. Valentine, Colonel Olin Scott, J. T. Shurtleff, John Robinson, Rev. Charles R. Seymour, Rev. M. L. Severance, E. J. Smith, E. M. Vail, Francis Guiltinan, Hon. Charles H. Mason, Judge C. H. Darling, Captain F. H. Buffum, representing the Boston *Herald*, E. Meacham, representing the Troy *Telegram*, J. H. Francisco, representing the Rutland *Herald*, Major Robert H. Coffey, representing the Burlington *Free Press*, J. H. Livingstone, representing the Bennington *Reformer*, Samuel L. Robinson, Frank Hinsdill, Edward L. Bates, representing the New York *Herald*, H. L. Stillson, representing the Bennington *Banner*. The four last named gentlemen were descendants of patriots who fought in the Battle of Bennington in 1777.

It is a remarkable fact that not a life was lost, nor any workman seriously injured during the entire course of the construction of the monument. The work was carried out from beginning to end, without a single hitch of any kind, and was completed in much less than schedule time. The contract price, including the construction of a wooden staircase inside, was a little over

\$76,000. By the time the masonry was completed, however, it had been decided not to build a wooden staircase, but to install one of iron instead. This, of course, added considerably to the expense. The total cost of the entire monument and site and laying out the grounds amounted to about \$112,000.

The formal dedication of the monument took place August 19, 1891. Vermont was admitted into the Union of States, March 4, 1791, being the first State to be added to the original thirteen composing the union. The anniversary of that important event occurring at a time of the year when climatic conditions are unfavorable to great celebrations, it was decided to celebrate the centennial of the admission of the State into the Union in conjunction with the anniversary of the Battle of Bennington. The sixteenth of August falling on a Sunday, the exact date of the dual celebration was fixed by Act of the General Assembly of Vermont for August 19, 1891. As the proceedings on that occasion have been recorded in great detail in an elaborate volume, which is still easily accessible, a single paragraph summarizing the principal features of the celebration will be sufficient in this record.

There was a monster parade of bands, military organizations, patriotic societies, civic bodies, fraternal orders and others. By actual count there were 4,484 persons in line and 511 carriage and saddle horses. The celebration was attended by President Harrison, who made two brief addresses during the day. The presiding officer was the Hon. Wheelock G. Veazey. The orator of the day

was the Hon. Edward J. Phelps, former Minister to Great Britain, and the invocation was offered by the Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, of Boston, a native of Sharon, Vermont. The oration by Mr. Phelps was a brilliant historical survey of the significance of the Battle of Bennington and the Independence of Vermont to the American Revolution. At the close of the exercises at the monument there was a great banquet at the Soldiers' Home grounds, at which 5000 persons sat down. Two immense tents were joined together for this purpose. After the banquet brief addresses were made by President Harrison, Governor Russell of Massachusetts, Governor Tuttle of New Hampshire, Major-General Oliver Otis Howard, U. S. A., Ex-Governor Alger of Michigan, Hon. Redfield Proctor, Secretary of War, Attorney-General Miller, President Webb of the College of the City of New York, General John G. McCullough, of Bennington, Ex-Governor Rice of Massachusetts, and others.

August 19, 1891 was one of the proudest days in the history of Bennington.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MONUMENT FACTS AND FIGURES

For those who are especially interested in such statistical information, the following facts and figures concerning the monument have been compiled from authoritative sources:

Erected by the Bennington Battle Monument Association, an organization formed by the Bennington Historical Society for the purpose of erecting a monument to commemorate the Battle of Bennington, and incorporated November 18, 1876.

Dimensions: Base 37 feet by 34 feet; thickness of foundation at bottom 9 feet; thickness of walls of superstructure at ground level 7 feet 6 inches, at apex 2 feet; height from bottom of corner stone to top of cap stone 301 feet 10½ inches; height from bottom of corner stone to top of star 306 feet 4½ inches.

The star itself, which is ten pointed, is 3 feet 3 inches in diameter; the rod and star together measure 4 feet 6 inches above the masonry; the star is of bronze, weighs about 125 pounds, and serves as a lightning rod point, being connected with the lightning rods which run down the inner walls of the structure.

The stone used in the superstructure is Sandy Hill dolomite, a blue-grey magnesian limestone of great hardness and durability.

The corner stone was laid on August 16, 1887, the cap stone on November 25, 1889; the monument was dedicated August 19, 1891.

The rectangular iron staircase was modelled after one in the Farnese Palace, Rome, said to have been designed by Michael Angelo and Vignola. The distinguishing features of the stairs, copied after the Roman model, are the wide and sloping tread with the front rise of only four inches, making ascent remarkably easy. Between the entrance hall and the grand look out floor there are thirty four flights, with a total of 417 steps.

The Entrance Hall is 20 feet by 20 feet and 39 feet high. The floor is of North River stone laid on iron beams. The ceiling is of iron and forms a large landing for the stairs. There is a basement ten feet high below this room. In the Entrance Hall are the "State Tablets," of Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

The Ante Room is at the height of 168 feet and is connected with the Grand Look Out floor by a winding iron stair.

The Grand Look Out Room is 18 feet square. The floor is constructed of North River stone, resting on brick arches. The battlefield can be easily seen from this room and the view of the surrounding country that can

be obtained well repays the trouble of the ascent. In this room are the inscribed tablets of the masonic fraternity, the Odd Fellows, the G. A. R., and Vermont Historical Society.

The monument and grounds really belong to the State of Vermont, but they are held in trust for the State by the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Association.

Total cost of monument and site and laying out the grounds, about \$112,000.

The fees collected at the monument are used (1) to pay the caretaker, (2) to keep up the grounds, (3) to keep the monument in proper repair.

The monument is said to be the highest *battle* monument in the country. It is, however, not as high as the Washington monument.

It is a curious fact, long since forgotten by most Benningtonians, that the monument has never been completed. At least, one important feature of the plans decided upon in 1887 has never been carried out, or even begun. It was intended to have sculptured over the entrance, in *bas relief*, three heads representing the principal military heroes—Stark, from New Hampshire, Allen, from Massachusetts, and Warner, from Vermont.

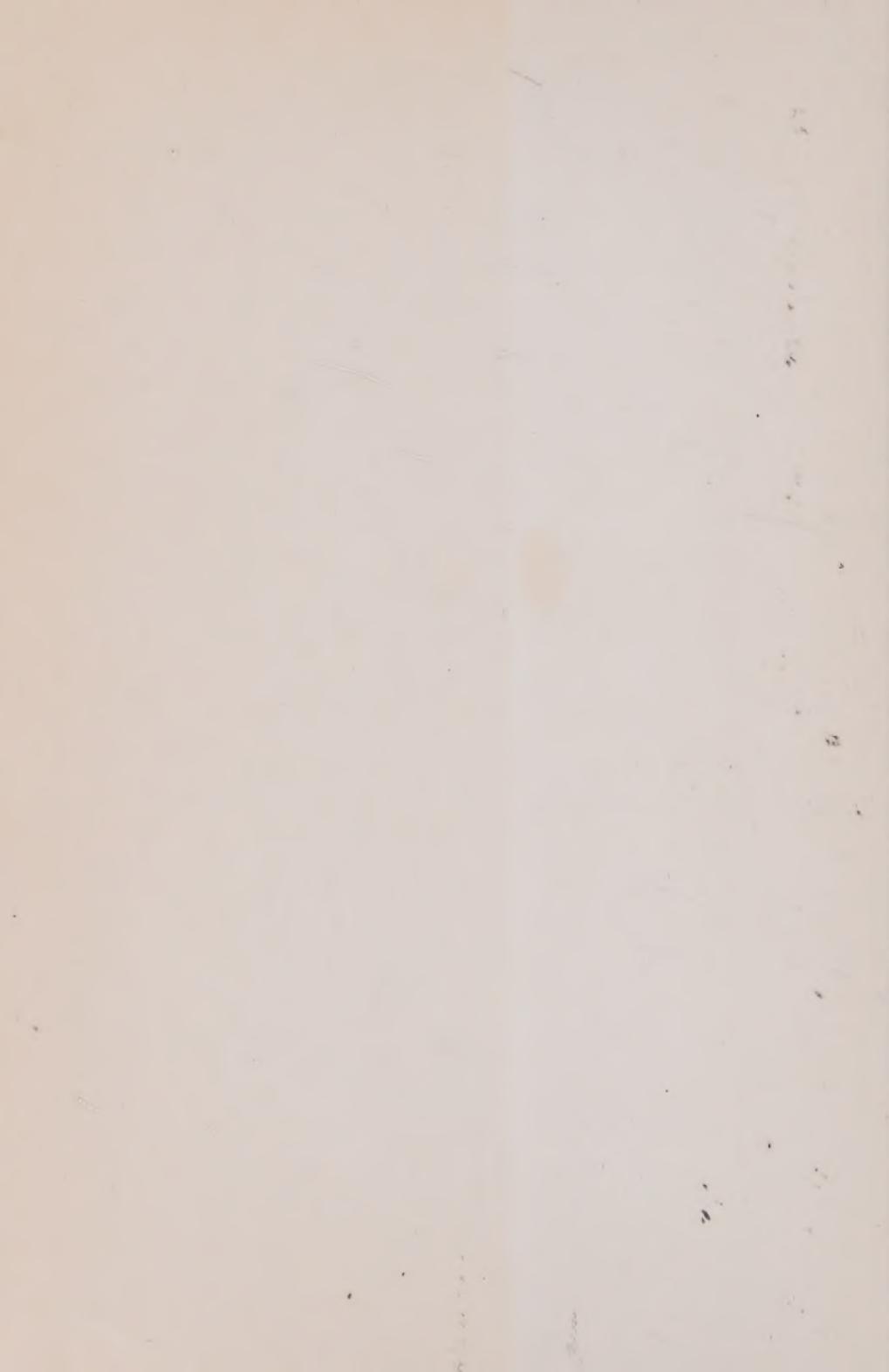
















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